Sound, Gender, Individual Will, and the Body in Nineteenth-Century British Literature

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on portrayals of music in 19th century British literature and culture, and the way that it reveals expectations and assumptions regarding gender roles and behavior. Through this study of accounts of musical performance, in sources such as fictional representations, performance reviews in periodicals, as well as diaries and letters, I bring out a series of paradoxical conflicts between certain problematic aspects of gender and social expectations, centering around the figure of the diva as celebrated emblem of transportative, ethereal beauty, and simultaneously reviled as an object of uncomfortably revealing physical display, inspiring fear and paranoia. This diva focus brings to the fore questions of uncertainty regarding the balance of power in gendered relations, as well as the "naturalness" of gendered behavior. I consider the way that the dynamic, commanding presence of the diva that gained prominence late in the 18th century radically changes in the Victorian era. Drawing inspiration from Keats and the Romantic poets, who use the nightingale to symbolize the artistic ideal, Victorian prima donnas end up becoming this nightingale. Jenny Lind's reputation (and wild success) as the "Swedish Nightingale" is the most direct application of this development. Discomforts with the realities that the traditional diva's presence brings into view end up leaking out into other areas, echoing the questions raised by her ghostly absence.

The chapters of this work focus on four specific areas where this rift is tangible. I consider Shelley's poetry about music from early in the century, as it attempts to erase the body from music entirely, and gender difference along with it in the first chapter. Shelley writes at roughly the same time as the Jane Austen, though Austen's works illuminate the function of music in a somewhat more practical manner. Austen repeatedly pinpoints a curious phenomenon surrounding musical drawing room performance for women, in which otherwise invisible women, often of reduced means, are able to exert a sort of power by physically claiming the space in which they move through music. This often parlays into positions of further control in society, which develops into a much more high-profile manipulation of control in novelistic depictions further into the century. The third chapter considers the development of perceived danger of women in musically inflated positions of power. I consider the situations of Clara Schumann's long career, and DuMaurier's fin-de-siècle heroine Trilby; in both of these cases outside forces are believed to control the power inherent in these women's musical performance. The final chapter moves on to the late century musical comedies of Gilbert and Sullivan, in which the low voice characters in particular question conceptions of the naturalness of gender and the way that separation of spheres functions in late Victorian society.

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Sound, Gender, Individual Will and the Body in Nineteenth-Century Britain

Overview

Music is a curious art form, functioning in the abstract and material, sounding notes that can function as undefined loose signifiers and deeply entrenched signals, social cues, and cultural markers. The slippery resistance to definition (and thus control) inherent in the nature of music is part of what makes it so fascinating, and often frightening at the same time. Through examination of this most difficult of all art forms to pin down, this project traces changes in gender roles and musical performance, probing the disconnect between perception, pre-conception, and physicality. In a scope that spans the greater part of the Nineteenth Century, I study the use of music, and the shorthand that accompanies it, to glimpse beneath the surface of commonplaces and cultural assumptions. The performance of music, particularly by women, has a way of bringing into relief the conscious and unconscious ways that gender is performed at this time, and the hidden expectations associated with both. Through this study of accounts of musical performance, in sources such as fictional representations, performance reviews in periodicals, as well as diaries and letters, I bring out a series of paradoxical conflicts between certain problematic aspects of gender and social expectations, centering around the figure of the diva as celebrated emblem of transportative, ethereal beauty, and simultaneously reviled as an object of uncomfortably revealing physical display, inspiring fear and paranoia. Not surprisingly, the diva as such was out of favor for most of the Victorian Era in Great Britain, as she brought to the fore questions of uncertainty regarding the balance of power in gendered relations, as well as the

"naturalness" of gendered behavior. A prescient literary example of this is the cautionary tale of the Alcharisi from *Daniel Deronda*, with her definite article title that simultaneously makes her more than human, and less so. The few divas that do function in British society are from continental Europe (usually Italy), who had to deal with mistrust combined with xenophobia brought on by conflict with continental Europe. As a result, the discomforts with the realities that the diva's presence forces into confrontation end up leaking out into other areas, and echoing the questions are raised by her ghostly absence.

The chapters of this work focus on four specific areas where this rift is palpable. I consider Shelley's poetry about music from early in the century, as it attempts to erase the body from music entirely, and gender difference along with it in the first chapter. Shelley's writing occurs at roughly the same time as those of Jane Austen, but Austen's works illuminate the function of music in a somewhat more practical manner. These much loved novels repeatedly pinpoints a curious phenomenon surrounding musical drawing room performance for women, in which otherwise invisible women, often of reduced means, are able to exert a sort of power by physically claiming the space in which they move through music. This often parlays into positions of further control in society, which develops into a much more high-profile manipulation of control in novelistic depictions further into the century. The third chapter considers the development of perceived danger of women in musically inflated positions of power. I contemplate the situations of Clara Schumann's long career, and DuMaurier's fin-de-siècle heroine Trilby; both cases in which outside forces are believed to control the

power inherent in women's musical performance. The final chapter moves on to the late century musical comedies of Gilbert and Sullivan, in which the low voice female characters in particular question conceptions of the naturalness of gender and the way that separation of spheres functions in late Victorian society.

Over the course of this work I will focus on a few central puzzles that are part of the landscape of Nineteenth-Century music and culture, which I find are best seen when displayed through the further cultural lens of 19th century literature. The first is the musical association with nature, particularly the nightingale, which is so pervasive in the Romantic Era, but comes to function differently later in the century. There are nightingale poems by virtually every major Romantic poet, but the most famous example is Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," so that seems like a good place to start. Keats engages the nightingale as a symbol, simultaneously representing both art and nature, in his sonic portrait of a garden afternoon, but his chase after the bird/symbol illuminates it as an alluring abstraction, an idea that is impossible to catch and encapsulate, thus freeing it to function as an ineffable, perfect idealization of what is possible but ultimately unattainable. (He also uses music's ephemeral and abstract qualities to conflate the nightingale and its song with his own art, poetry, but that is another story, and one that we will look at further in Chapter One). Evidence of this use of the nightingale as impossible musical/artistic symbol is apparent early in the poem, with his invocation of the bird as "light-winged Dryad of the trees" who sings in "In some melodious plot / Of beechen green, and shadows numberless" that is conspicuously left undefined (Lines 7-9). The otherworldly reference to the bird as

"light-winged Dryad" sets the scene with imagery that is eternal yet ephemeral (light here is most likely meaning relative weightlessness, but includes the possibility of wings made of light, the substance itself), but it is the description of the setting in which the bird circulates, which starts, and remains, undefined and invisible to the speaker, that makes the impossible realm in which the nightingale exists so temptingly out of reach. This creation of ideal, unattainable perfection is further developed in the fifth stanza of the poem ("I cannot see what flowers are at my feet") as the poet strives after the nightingale in the dark, attempting to define the undefinable through an examination of the surrounding elements, using his other senses. The next stanza becomes increasingly desperate, stretching the lengths to which he will go to reach this unattainable goal even to the realm of death itself. There is, of course, a wealth of material in the poem to consider with regards to this topic, but the last two lines sum up the phenomenon of the nightingale as a frustratingly evanescent artistic ideal; the speaker is further from attaining the artistic essence of what the nightingale represents than when he started, and ultimately cannot tell if it even existed at all: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music: —Do I wake or sleep?" (79-80).

Where Keats and the Romantic poets use the nightingale to symbolize the artistic ideal, it becomes so pervasive that Victorian prima donnas must become this nightingale. Jenny Lind's reputation (and wild success) as the "Swedish Nightingale" is the most direct application of this development. The demands on these women are the same kind of artistic purity and physical formlessness.[1] It is at the end of the century

[1] Rupert Christiansen's *Prima Donna* encapsulates this change: "The Victorian prima donna is a frailer

that the cracks in this ideal become impossible to ignore. The impossible de-natured ideal of voice separated from the physical world corrupted by earthly passions is coupled with the paradoxical insistence on nature itself as a pre-requisite for acceptability: the preference was for female singers who sang "artlessly" and were "natural" talent, as opposed to the more artfully trained, ornamental singing of the previous era. The critical reception of Jenny Lind and those that succeeded her, tirelessly comparing her to birds and other natural phenomenon, are testament to this. The composer Chopin was noted in referring her vocal quality as "a kind of Northern Lights," while, as Christiansen says, "others babbled of woodland freshness" (104). Isabelle Emerson's *Five Centuries of Women Singers* further illuminates the perfect storm of Lind's success, saying that "she cut a swath broader and deeper than any female singer until Madonna" partly due to her "careful simplicity of her presentation of her self—invariably in simple, usually white gown, little make-up, plain hair style, the embodiment of the non-threatening compliant female" (241). Of course, her strict disavowal of ornamentation was doubtless disarming in this manner, but also went a long way toward the creation of the ethereal otherworldliness and identification with idealized nature that draws from the Romantic poetic nightingale ideal. As a side note, the unimpeachable moral standards exemplified and expected of these women bears

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and more impressionable creature than her early Romantic counterpart. Compared with the heroic characters of Medea, Norma, Semiramide, or Anna Bolena, the Victorians turned to a more anodyne femininity and to a vocal style which in some ways was a throwback to that of Mrs Billington—pure silvery tone without vibrato, firm in intonation but limited in colour and emotional range, with a spectacular top register and an easy coloratura, but nothing in the chest to give out the splendid range of a Pasta. The parts the 'nightingales' preferred—Zerlina in Don Giovanni, (etc) . . . were those of innocent victims, sweet-tempered, yielding, and duped. They are the virgin maidens of old men's sexual fantasy . . . in general, they answered the Victorian male culture's obsession with women as ministering angel." (95)

some resemblance to the other famous nightingale of the day, nursing icon Florence Nightingale. The project that she undertook to redeem to image of nurses from the collective negative reputation they had going into the Victorian age, as gin-swilling, unfeeling mercenaries, was a different kind of uphill battle from that of redeeming the image of female stage performers, but no less arduous. A few singers rose to the top in this discriminating market, and largely due to their success at filling this "nightingale" role. The expectations for not only singers, but the art form of music as a whole, to be the shining ideal of purity and perfection, are summarized best by Arthur Sullivan himself, in an address entitled "About Music," from 1888:

> Herein lies one of the divine attributes of music, in that it is absolutely free from the power of suggesting anything immoral . . . . Music can suggest no improper thought, and herein may be claimed its superiority over painting and sculpture, both of which may, and, indeed, do at times, depict and suggest impurity. This blemish, however, does not enter into music; sounds alone (apart from articulate words, spectacle, or descriptive programme) must, from their indefinite nature, be innocent. Let us thank God that we have one elevating and ennobling influence in the world which can never, never lose its purity and beauty.[2]

The diva, such that she is in the Nineteenth Century, becomes the vessel into which this unrealistic expectation is poured. Of course, the diva at this time is still a relatively new social construct, and one that actually owes much to the 18th century artists who come before her, the castrati. In fact, the famous castrati singers were, without question, the first divas. But it is the forcible unsexing of these singers that contributes to the myth surrounding these larger-than life singers, treated as both super-human and inhuman.

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[2] [Sullivan's complete address, "About Music," is reprinted in Arthur Lawrence's *Sir Arthur Sullivan: life-story, letters, and reminiscences*, 1899; this excerpt is taken from p. 285]

An early Eighteenth Century English scholar describing a castrato's voice in concert brings this spectacle into focus: "It had all the Warblings and Turns of a Nightingale, with only this difference, that it was much finer and did not a man know the contrary, he would believe it impossible that such a Tone could proceed from the throat of anything that was human."[3] This musical otherworldliness becomes a residual effect when female singers step into the shoes of the castrati, after the practice is shunned later in the century. And the idea of women as nightingales is already an embedded cultural memory, stretching back to Ancient Greek myths about Philomela and Procne, which makes it rich for amplification by the Victorian era. Nevertheless, early nineteenth century singers like Pasta and Catalini are not subjected to the same rigid demands that their Victorian counterparts are—part of the change may indeed be backlash against the display of power and demanding aspects of the great Romantic divas, though the influence of stricter gender roles and separation of spheres, along with the seeds of idealized, natural innocence planted by the Romantic poets, make a large impact as well. The singer-as-nightingale idea does not start in the Victorian era, by any means, but the expectations surrounding these women, that of artless nature and perfect art separate from the sordid world of physical, sensual existence, becomes so idealized and yet unattainable that the pressure surrounding music, and the women who make it, rises to a pitch, so to speak, that inevitably starts to crack at the end of the century, as we shall see as this project unfolds.

[3] From *Eunichism display'd*, Ancillon, p 30)

Another intimately connected paradox is the fact that music, at that time, was no longer a pursuit that was appropriate to men (unless they are part of the dwindling group of English composers) and instead was relegated to being a largely "feminine" pursuit, degraded for various reasons, though effective in demonstrating female marriageability--music was seen as both unworthy and unmanly for men but edifying for women. However, in spite teaching lessons like obedience, discipline, and ability to provide comfort, women's music was still perceived as dangerous and in need of careful guarding and strict control. How ccould music be, at the same time, dangerous for the potential strength it can lend to women, and yet and art form that young men were discouraged from practicing or engaging in, for fear that it might enervate them and render men less powerful? Other contradictions stemming from this involve the otherworldly and ephemeral aspect of musical sound, with every attempt to divorce it from the physical, and yet women who performed this music did so in a manner that best situates them for physical display. The performance of music was meant to be a display that attracted suitors and indicated marriageability, and yet a woman who betrayed here awareness of this display, seeming to use music as a tool of seduction, was repellant and obscene. Music was not a respectable pursuit of the male landed aristocrat, and yet, for women with no physical property and only musical accomplishment to boast of, musical sound could have a territorial effect, claiming the space in which it was performed, and extending those claims beyond the drawing room. These are only a few of the strange, seemingly conflicting qualities that are applied to

music at this time, and it is these baffling intersections that have attracted my inquiring examination into the period.

I am particularly interested in this depiction in 19th-century literature of music and gender roles because of the legacy we have inherited from the Victorians, which still carries through in our ideas about music today. Music reached a breaking point at the turn of the 19th century-- with the professional music scene declining into either backward-looking (Handel Mania, etc.) or pandering to the box office, and private performance of music pushed to the margins as a degraded "feminine" art, or associated with foreign artists/would be invaders. This all amounts to a cultural mistrust of music, ostensibly due to inferior musical offerings from native musicians, but more likely brought on by the demand for tame, un-threatening music, and fear of surrender to the power music was (and is) perceived to hold.

Objectives, Background, and Perspective

Existing criticism on music and literature often dwells on refuting the misconception of Nineteenth Century England as a "land without music," (like Nicholas Temperley's scholarship uncovering little acknowledged composers and musicians) or considers the situation of women, and the oppressive nature of musical training. Others look at musical misconceptions in terms of class and performance practice, like Derek Scott's *The Singing Bourgeois*. My project is largely indebted to the "New Musicology" critics of recent years, particularly Richard Leppert's work uncovering illustrations (both visual and literary) of gender and music as they play out in the 18th and 19th century. His research focusing on visual depictions of women at the keyboard, and the

way that details in these artistic representations reveal underlying aspects of class, gender, and other behaviors and beliefs, inspired my current investigation. In this way, I examine culturally-coded behavioral ticks in order to discover the conflicting ideals, opposing forces, and false constructs that they reveal. In gender studies, I have found a wealth of material in the works of Judith Halberstam and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, as well as music and gender works by Susan McClary, in conceptualizing shifting gender roles beyond the Victorian era. My project narrows in on the growing, unresolved tensions surrounding music at this time, which blossom into our own assumptions and notions of music today.

Music early in the nineteenth century occupied a precarious place. On one hand, it was a cultural marker, with concerts attracting audiences as a show of refinement and membership in the upper classes for those with "new" money. Once these concert-goers arrived at their destination, though, the music was often the least important element of the event. Examples of this can be seen all over letters and novelistic accounts from this time, from sources as diverse as Jane Austen's letters, as well as her novel *Persuasion*, William Hazlitt's essays, and Charles Burney's *Musical Histories* (and Fanny Burney's *Evelina*), to name just a few. There was an audience for music concerts, but it was not the thriving artistic scene to parallel the German or Italian movements at the time Maitland's *English Music in the XIXth Century* looks back at the beginning of the nineteenth century from the perspective of 1902, comparing it unfavorably to the "musical renaissance" of Elgar and his audiences:

> The typical lady of the past generation, whose habit it was to profess herself 'passionately fond of music' just before she settled herself close to the piano with

> a bosom friend, with the object of enjoying a long and confidential conversation 'under cover of the music', is practically extinct, like her male counterpart, the country gentleman who used to declare that he did not know 'God save the Queen' from any other tune. (134)

This quotation plays off the reputation England gained at this time as "Das Land Ohne Musik," a classification which, like all sweeping categorizations, has a lot of holes in it. Like most modern critics, I disagree with this characterization of an English musical vacuum, though there is certainly a drawing back from the bold innovations and developments that characterize the musical activity in continental Europe during the 19th century, mostly driven by the fear of foreign interlopers and powerful "diva" figures, which I will examine further below. Nevertheless, the "land without music" myth one that still circulates widely. Music was an essential component smaller group gatherings, like salons and drawing rooms—though here the caveat is the ulterior motive of feminine display for the marriage market. With these secondary qualities so firmly attached to music at this time, the physical and the musically ephemeral became securely tied together. Add to this the wave of sentimentalism from the "man of feeling" trend, insisting upon transparent physical display of emotion (in order to prove "genuine" manliness) in music and elsewhere. Music was (and is) an extremely physical phenomenon, and intimately connected to the shifting constructions of gender at the time.

With this physical musical environment, men had little to do with music. Carrying on the tradition from the century before, which has been fastidiously documented in Richard Leppert's Music and Image, as well as Nicholas Temperley's

essay in *The Lost Chord* and other current and contemporary sources, music making was generally discouraged for men. Locke's decisive views on this, expressed in his 1693 *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, have become somewhat ubiquitous in this discussion, but bear repeating:

> (Music) wastes so much of a young Man's time, to gain but a moderate Skill in it, and engages often in such odd Company, that many think it much better spared: And I have, amongst Men of Parts and Business, so seldom heard any one commended, or esteemed for having an Excellency in Musick, that amongst all those things that ever came into the List of Accomplishments, I think I may give it the last place. (150-151)

Locke's forthright opinion is echoed in letters of advice and conduct manuals of the next two centuries[4]. Even in the romantic era, for all of its attempts at reshaping of the codes of the past, musical gender roles remain in place. As Gillen D'Arcy Wood notes from Leigh Hunt's chronicles of family music making, "Poetry and music serve here as the enabling language of highly formalized erotic play, but also of a radical, progressive social formation. The melo-poetic evening functions as a meeting ground for the sexes in which the strict regulation of gender roles produces a general harmony. Both 'soft'

[4] Burgan addresses this in her article "Heroines at the Piano," noting that: Though learning to play the piano was a requirement for middle-class girls, tutelage in piano-playing seems to have had little place in the curriculum for boys. Although there were fine professional male composers and performers of music in nineteenth-century England, there seems to have been a bias against educating middle-class males for amateur instrumental performance. . . . Such a bias against music as a waste of the ordinary English gentleman's time can be seen in nineteenth-century English fiction. The native Englishmen who play instruments in British novels tend to be schoolmasters or clergy- men, and in either case they tend to be seen as eccentric, though often admirable, examples of manhood. A number of Victorian memoirists have commented on this British prejudice against amateur male musicians. Mrs. C.- S. Peel observed that "gentlemen also sang and duets were in high favour, but play the piano gentlemen did not, that being considered a task only fit for ladies and professional musician"

and ‘manly’ voices may read poetry, but ‘fair hands’ play the piano and harp” (*Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain*, 1770-1840 121). Some barriers between men and women are being transfigured, but the grounded separation of roles in the area of the arts remained firm.

Manliness or masculinity as a construct, though, was in a state of flux, as Tim Fulford notes in *Romanticism and Masculinity*: “Romanticism’s versions of masculinity reflect the cultural crisis occurring between these dates, the crisis first diagnosed by Burke. They emerge from a society in which traditional models of authority and gender had been discredited without being successfully replaced. . . . The very link between authority, political power, and masculinity is itself brought into question” (9). Fulford goes on to consider the implications of this shift further into the century, in the context of King George IV’s behavior:

> Aristocratic domination of power was doomed: the Reform Act was, according to Cobbett, made inevitable by the Caroline trial because the middle and lower classes had seen that they themselves preserved the codes of duty, honour, paternalism and patriotism which their king now failed to embody. Chivalric manhood did not die; it was relocated in the middle classes. They made duty, honour, and paternalism the basis of their claim to govern just as they had formerly been the foundation of the aristocracy’s defense of its power. And so the appearance of proper authority and good government stayed masculine even as they passed from the exclusive grasp of the nobility. (9)

The idea of this transference of the center of hegemonic masculinity from the aristocracy to the middle-class aligns with the gender politics of the musical arts at this time, with the focus on musical gender roles in the “domestic sphere,” and the physical, feminine associations music contains at this time. John Tosh’s *A Man’s Place* focuses on early Victorian middle class masculinity, with similar findings:

> The constraints of social propriety were never far away. Moreover, the rituals of home life had an unmistakably feminine quality. Women featured much more prominently in domestic entertainments than men. Music-making should have been, as Samuel Smiles urged, an occasion for shared performance, but in practice gentlemen were not expected to play the piano in company, and most drawing-room songs were written for female voice. The social side of domestic life was also regarded as falling within the wife's sphere. (124)

This gender separation is well-documented in Temperley's *English Songs, 1800-1860*, as well as Derek Scott's *The Singing Bourgeois, Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, but how it came into existence in the first place is a much more interesting question. Part of the divide was likely due to the fact that men and women typically occupied different areas of the Victorian home, and when mixed company separated, it was the women who would withdraw to the drawing room for music and other pursuits, while the men sought after dinner drinks and (later) smoking. Nevertheless, this gender divide on the realm of music, and the troubling associations that are yoked to music and gender roles in the nineteenth century, expose a great deal about gender assumptions in and beyond this time, as well as how these social constructs function and operate to reveal the truth and fictions of our lives, and the inner-workings of human condition in general.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One deals with Percy Shelley's musical figures (or lack thereof), in his closet drama *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), along with his late lyrics for his love interest Jane Williams. I consider music in Shelley's poetry, and its extreme abstraction, taking the ideals of birds (usually nightingales) and Aeolian harps and making them even more diffuse and idealized. In fact, music is separated from the physical world completely, but

still innately attached to humanity. Even as music is separated from the material realm, it is imbued with special powers of renewal and inspiration. The lack of sensual imagery in these poems and their focus on transcendent, otherworldly relationships and images of human potential deny the physical almost completely. What is of foremost consideration here, though, is the way the world-changing power of music impacts the gender mores and habits exhibited in Shelley's poetry. This musical attitude is of interest because of the way that Shelley's musical disembodiment defies gender expectation: instead of reinforcing the ideas of purity for women, the ephemeral musical ideas circumvent and transcend rational thought by using involuntary methods of communication and understanding. The formal and thematic elements of Shelley's musically imagistic poetry dwell frequently on ways that music, whether metaphorical or actual, circumvents and transcends rational thought by using involuntary methods of communication and understanding. Music, and the musical reshaping of landscape, creates a sense of ephemerality, and acts to reshape the conception of gender that manifests in Shelley's later works. The rhetoric of transcending the body acts counter to the 18th century idea of exterior display of interior emotion which was so important for the "man of feeling" in the century before. These works show that there are changes afoot to the shape of the way that masculinity interacts with music at the beginning of the Victorian period.

Chapter Two dwells on the preoccupation with land, and landed gentry, in Jane Austen's novels. Significantly, it is not land, but a decided lack of physical property, or groundlessness (the inability to inherit a landed estate), that often identifies Austen's musical heroines and other musical characters. While characters like Lady Catherine de

Bourgh and her daughter Anne, and even Emma Woodhouse, need not exert themselves as musicians, the less fortunate (and property-less) young musical women in these novels cultivate "accomplishments" to ameliorate their situations in life. Music for Austen's women functions as more than an accomplishment—static once it has been acquired—and instead works instead as a renewable personal resource. From Mary Bennet's move to aggressively control space through musical performance to Anne Elliot's creation of a personal space for solitude in a crowd, these characters make music and, through it, attempt to carve out an island of stability for themselves. This significantly revises the bigger picture of music and its relation to gender roles by presenting an altered face to the "problem" of musical women and music as an avenue to power in the gender dynamic.

Chapter Three further considers the idea of musical manipulation and control, involving the hypnotic power of music and the imagined ability of music to communicate emotion and intent unbeknownst to the musician. This fear of a musician falling under the musical control of another is associated exclusively with women, at this time, with the real danger occurring when women are unduly influenced, and transmit this influence to men under false pretense. While women manipulating men via music are dangerous up to a point, a greater evil (purportedly) occurs when unsuspecting women become channels of emotional power. Du Maurier's novel *Trilby* (which acts as a sort of bridge between the phenomenon of the Castrati as deceptively feminine man in the century before, and the 20th century fear of being duped by a "drag queen"), shows this fear of musical women actually masking the hidden control of men, not unlike modern examples of similar fears (which I consider in examples like the 1990's film, *The Crying Game*). I

juxtapose these examples with first-hand accounts of a musical woman cast as transmitter of musical thought, in Clara Schumann. She was, undoubtedly, a musical genius in her own right, and possessed talents both in creating and interpreting music that were inimitable. Nevertheless, reports of and retrospectives of Schumann's career, circulated widely at the time *Trilby* was written, focus on her as an embodiment of her father's method of teaching, and as a physical extension of her dead husband. Critics and audiences persist in casting her own compositions as, at best, echoes of the famous men she worked with so closely; ultimately, her musical legacy until well into the twentieth century was as a "reproductive" keyboard musician, who was able to uniquely channel the "spirit" of the male composer (or teacher) behind the woman.

Chapter Four moves forward in time to the 1880's, examining the phenomenon of the unpredictable alto in the operatic representations of Gilbert and Sullivan. Looking specifically at the roles of Lady Jane in *Patience*, Iolanthe and The Fairy Queen in *Iolanthe*, and Katisha in *The Mikado*, I probe the differences in the way Gilbert treats the soprano romantic ingénue parts and the more pioneering alto roles, derived from the famous collaborators' unique interpretation of burlesque "dame" characters. I examine the roots of Gilbert's notorious reputation for misogyny and cruelty to women, and his ultimate channeling of his own inner diva into the audacious, sassy also roles of his famous opera collaborations. Gilbert and Sullivan are among the earliest to create and expand the roles for lower voiced women in opera, after Verdi's developments in mezzo-soprano and alto prominent roles (beyond pants roles or tiny comprimario parts) mid-century. As this develops beyond the 1880's, the contrast between the voices carries out

even further, and is intimately related to this stifled physicality and self-control that is promoted in the Victorian era. In contrast to the soprano, who is far more likely to follow gender norms (whether as an operatic martyr or as a thin-voiced, delicate, wilting flower), the alto develops into a disruptive figure who continually throws a wrench in the larger plans of the plot. Altos are painted as dangerous because they don't play by the rules. The deeper voices are characterized as more manly, perhaps, but they also reveal a discomfort with the depth and gravity of the sound produced by the low-voiced woman— the alto leaves "bird-like" sopranos far behind—there can be no question that this sound comes from the mouth of a woman, thus calling unwanted attention to the physical, embodied nature of the sound.

By taking specific literary and musical moments and dilating and exposing hidden resonances and revelations within them, I hope that this project will expand and question thinking about "musical accomplishment," courtship, changes in musical gender roles, and the effects on the acoustic spaces in which these elements intermingle. These musical contradictions and points of tension are still circulating today, though they have mutated into our cultural concept of shame surrounding the revelation of the sensual or physical associated with the woman musician, our fear of musical deception or being "duped" by a secretly lip-synching performer (or a man singing as a woman), and the general fear of losing control to music, or losing control of music (especially in its potential power over the easily susceptible). The gendered nature of our current cultural musical suspicion is perhaps nowhere more evident than the fear of the female singer's body as a sexualized object. Nipple-slippage (or "wardrobe malfunction") makes the

audience aware of the physical and sensual being behind the music, and thwarts the cultural conception of musical purity. In our age and for the Victorians, music is more dangerous when it reaches beyond disembodied, ethereal abstraction. Uncovering the buried roots of our current understanding of culture and art's role in shaping constructs like gender can have impact on understanding each other and ourselves, and shed much needed light on how we live now.

Chapter One: From Romantic Birdsong to the Singing Woman: Shelley and the Disembodying of Music

Late in his life, Shelley wrote this in a letter to John Gisborne: "I have a boat here . . . Williams is captain, and we drive along this delightful bay in the evening wind, under the summer moon, until earth appears another world. Jane brings her guitar, and if the past and the future could be obliterated, the present would content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment "Remain, thou, thou art so beautiful" (PBSL 2, 434). The power that Shelley ascribes to music in this situation, that of reshaping the world and obliteration of time (or initiating a wished for, imaginative erasure), is one that strikes a chord, formally and thematically, with his own writing invoking music. What is of foremost consideration here, though, is the way that this world-changing power of music impacts the gender mores and habits exhibited in Shelley's poetry. The foundation for valuing music as an ephemeral, formless ideal, and incarnation of natural inspiration and purity is largely established by the Romantic poets, has a major impact on the way that musical women are perceived and assessed as the century progresses; nowhere is this more apparent than it is in Shelley's writing. In many ways, Shelley takes off from where Wordsworth starts in poems like "Solitary Reaper" and extrapolates even further on the desirable alienation of music from the corporeal source of the sound. The formal and thematic elements of Shelley's musical poetry dwell frequently on ways that music, whether metaphorical or actual, attempts to circumvent rational thought processes. In considering the formal details of music, language, and poetry in Shelley's lyric poetry, along the line of Wolfson's *Formal*

Charges, but focusing on the larger cultural questions that individual works tap into, after I have provided detailed close readings. I would like to consider the unique role of music in the way that Shelley treats the question of gender distinctions. I will concentrate particularly on the vision of un-gendered love and human potential that Shelley articulates in his late lyrics to Jane Williams, as well as passages from *Prometheus Unbound*. These texts propose a distinctive form of masculinity that attempts to go past a physical, structured construct of male behavior, using music as a vehicle for transcendence. Employing an idealized, often formless concept of music to uplift and move beyond material existence into a realm of meta-physical interpersonal relations, these late lyrics present an unorthodox take on gender construction, or, in this case, deconstruction. I would also like to consider the way that Shelley's lyrics work against the prevailing ideas of strict physical distinction between genders that are associated with the 19th century. If we look at these examples as providing a counter-narrative to the received understanding of gender and music at this time, does excerpting and popular circulation during the century disarm these disruptive qualities, turning them into a sort of kitsch, or is their circulation an acknowledgement of a different understanding of what it means to be a man, or a woman, in early Nineteenth Century Britain? How does the contemporary understanding of music as an art form figure in this use of music as a vehicle of transcendence and freedom? And how does the goal of transcendence and freedom become a cage of sorts, as it develops into the expectation of an impossible musical and artistic ideal which women musicians struggle to escape? These are some of the questions I will address as we move forward.

The actual functional evidence of the strictness of musical gender roles, which I discuss in the introduction as well, is something that I will be looking at from other angles in chapters to follow, but the specifics of music, gender, and its connection to physical embodiment early in the century are what I want to question for the moment. Richard Leppert addresses a particularly knotty aspect of this gender division as he considers 19th century art, in *The Sight of Sound*:

> The "problem," then, is woman and the "problem" is music. Music is a problem precisely because the culture genders it as feminine, it is simultaneously a source of bliss to men and a threat to them. . . . The end result is the transportation of women and their music to the celestial sphere above. This is a better place; presumably this is a better woman (we know that from the iconographical tradition of St Cecilia). And this is a better music. The trouble is that this "better" woman is disembodied, and the (safer) celestial music she makes cannot be heard. (148)

Disembodiment, as a solution to the problem of women's physical display during music making, is a polite lie "floated" in the social commentary and song text of the day. Some drawing-room ballads have lyrics that focus on the natural world (Moore's "Last Rose of Summer," Bennett's "Dawn Gentle Flower," Loder's "The Wandering Wind") or the nostalgic investment of emotion in physical place instead of the body (Bishop's ubiquitous "Home Sweet Home," among others), in an effort to distract from the reality of music as a vehicle for woman's bodily display. The success of this ruse is debatable, and it did not so much question the construction of gender roles through music as much as it attempted to divert attention from it. And the repercussions of creating an illusion of women's music as an unwilled, "natural" occurrence reverberated far into the 19th century, as we will explore in the last two chapters.

Romantic poetry is virtually filled with nightingales and singing women who are treated like birds, singing without the acknowledgement of agency, or even the right to define what their words signify. Sarah Goodwin, in her essay from *Embodied Voices*, "Wordsworth and Romantic Voice," highlights this use music as an unstable corporeal, gender specific vehicle:

> The juncture of music and the feminine is common in cultural representations during the Romantic period, and especially so in Wordsworth's poetry. In such texts, the poet responds to music by modeling his poetic utterance on the physicality of song, and aligning song with the woman, he thus encounters and subsumes the feminine voice. Repeatedly, for the male Romantic writer, to appropriate femininity is to also appropriate the woman's embodied voice, itself often represented as more physical than verbal, as ecstatic, dangerous, seductive, and mysterious—and in need of a mastering vehicle. (66-67)

This "mastering vehicle" is exactly the idea that comes back to haunt later Victorians, as I discuss in Chapter Three. Goodwin refers specifically here to a section of "Michael" in which a "natural tune" is associated with the Mother's breast, and then employed to construct an image of fire-side homeliness. While the insistence on "appropriating" femininity, as well as "subsuming" are slightly dramatic descriptions, there is definitely something to this argument. As we will look at in examples below, both Coleridge and Wordsworth utilize the trope of women's music as a "natural," pre-symbolic utterance, (almost like a human Aeolian harp), and proceed to employ it for their own purposes. But Shelley's musical metaphoricity, as I will demonstrate, differs considerably from this model. Critical perspectives on Shelley and metaphoricity swing dramatically on a spectrum, starting perhaps most dramatically from F. R. Leavis's infamous essay in *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry,* in which

he announces Shelley's "weak grasp on the actual" and "inability to learn from experience" (205). (This is not to mention T.S. Eliot's well known views on Shelley.) On the other end of the continuum we find more sympathetic voices, as varied as Harold Bloom, Jerrold Hogle, and Jeffrey Cox (among many others). Paul Vatalaro's recent work considers Shelley's musical influence in conjunction with subjectivity, "conceiving of voice and music as correlative components of a fantasy narrative that consistently recycles itself through Shelley's writing, and assuming that Shelley's fascination with voice and music interacts with a larger cultural fantasy that sexualizes human expression." (8). But perhaps the most relevant musical contemplation of Shelley is Lawrence Kramer's *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After:* "Shelley's metaphors of the self take on much of their volatility by participating in a cathectic rhythm so forceful that it can momentarily obliterate the fixities of discursive form—boundaries, definitions, the whole paraphernalia of secondary-process thinking. It is just such cathectic intensity that in general, allows musical and poetic form to take ego-activity as a model and to converge as a result" (97). This seeming obliteration of form, pushing beyond boundaries, is tied to the insistence on an impossibly unattainable musical ideal that I wish to illuminate in Shelley's music writing. I want to examine the specific phenomenon of Shelley's musical poetry as it seeks to obliterate traditional forms and barriers, often through memory, dream imagery, and involuntary work of the mind. Shelley uses musical metaphor in a way that attempts to shake the reader out of complacency and prosaic, unthinking acceptance of the state of things, acceptance of dead metaphors as fact-- forcing acknowledgment of a world beyond the everyday,

plodding along. the intellect, with its tendency to rationalize and equate the new with the already known, needs occasional short-circuiting—one way is to appeal directly to the unconscious, the involuntary process of the mind—the memory. Music, memory, and the promise of unattainable perfection become inextricably linked in Shelley's poetics, foreshadowing the musical expectations of the era immediately to follow.

Wordsworth, who exerts a significant influence on Shelley and all of the second-generation romantics, employs music as a more concrete, or at least palpably sensory force within his few poems overtly about music. Where Shelley uses music to short-circuit intellect and erase nature, Wordsworth's music often does just the opposite—acting as an connective tissue binding the poet/perceiver to the world around him (in most cases, the natural world). For Wordsworth, music is a flowing connective medium, evident from episodes in *The Prelude* to shorter poems like "On the Power of Sound." One important poem that includes music in an integral role is "The Solitary Reaper." In it, Wordsworth's autobiographically-inflected speaker describes an encounter as a musical eavesdropper in a natural setting:

> Behold her, single in the field,
> Yon solitary Highland Lass!
> Reaping and singing by herself;
> Stop here, or gently pass!
> Alone she cuts, and binds the grain,
> And sings a melancholy strain;
> O listen! for the Vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound.(1-8)

In this excerpt, five of the eight lines make pointed reference to the "solitariness" of the singing woman. The setting, therefore, is not just in nature, but alone in nature, without

any surrounding social or cultural cues to lend signifying import. The speaker importunes the reader to listen, so that both can experience the phenomenon of her singing, and through this, her experience of nature. Immediately after this passage we witness the struggle, on the part of the speaker, to fully identify with the woman, to understand what she sings, and through this comprehend and vicariously experience her (seemingly) unmediated state of being "in tune" with nature.

In this passage the singing fills the natural space in which the reaper is located, expanding to envelop a vast stretch of nature: "O listen! for the Vale profound / Is overflowing with the sound." The vale, as representative of nature, almost takes an active role in this sentence—instead of the sound performing the action, the focus is on the space that is filled, and the impressive, spontaneous manner in which it is filled, and the immoderate nature of the overflow (as if music were water instead of deliberately produced human art). The vale as sounding space is accentuated by Wordsworth's erratic use of traditional noun capitalization, giving the geographic figure prominence in the sentence. Also, the enjambment between "profound" and "is" not only echoes the sense of the words, with the line overflowing its bounds, but also creates a potential for active response from the vale (if the line is read by itself as an imperative command) as if the Vale were something to be listened to. If a vale can be "profound," perhaps it can reply to the singing woman. Regardless, the participation between the singer and nature, as perceived by the speaker, gestures to an almost supernatural communication between the two. The otherworldliness is echoed in the next stanza, with the "haunts" associated with the exotic nightingale. The connection with the nightingale further attaches this to

the vast body of nightingale Romantic poetry, and further erases the woman in question. For Wordsworth, music enhances nature and creates a "nature plus," almost giving the natural setting an extra dimension. Music does enhance the dimension of time—creating an organized yet fluid aspect that temporarily fills both time and space, bringing them together and giving both a quality that allows memory to adhere to isolated moments.

The speaker's attempt to identify with the singer through language is denied; the words, which might function as a "way in" for the listeners, are inaccessible due to the language barrier between the two; this communication enables the song to function as a perfect, untouched communication between the woman and nature (though the perfection likely exists only in the mind of the perceiving poet/speaker). His final message, at the close of the poem, gives a certain weight to the song that cannot be experienced by the setting or the singer alone:

> I listened till I had my fill
> And, as I mounted up the hill,
> The music in my heart I bore,
> Long after it was heard no more. (29-32)

Like the natural setting, the listener/speaker/poet is filled, though there is an important shift in agency. Instead of "overflowing" in an uncontrollable (though interactive) way, the speaker calculatingly and meditatively takes in the sound. The natural (though unpunctuated) pause at the end of the line, after the word "fill," accentuates the listener's interior control over the experienced sound, even as it occurs. He takes in not only the music as spontaneous outpouring, but also the phenomenon of the natural setting reflecting and echoing the sound; thus only the listener/speaker is privileged to comprehend this particular manifestation of the sound, as a fluid connection between

himself, the unknowing performer, and the space which shapes the sound. The (imagined) perfect sympathy between the reaper and the vale is denied to the speaker, who cannot experience the unbarred, spontaneous "overflow" of sound, but, through his willful drinking in of the sound, he is able to retain something different. As the listener/speaker/poet asserts the agency to take in "his fill," he isolates and reflects on the musical interaction he has witnessed, which gives him the lingering memory of the event—the lasting retention of it in the final lines of the poem: "The music in my heart I bore,/ Long after it was heard no more." This relocates the "strain" of music making into a strain on the part of the poet/speaker, as he "bears" the song like a burden. The spatial functioning of music has been transferred from the vast, overflowing vale to the unseen listener's heart, which is paired with the verb "bore," thus giving an impression of physical retention of the song, even suggesting a sort of sound-induced pregnancy that can ultimately give birth to the poem itself. Wordsworth takes on the physical power of the woman in the field, even the physical potential of woman to give birth. While this move ends up as something of a push against gender roles, it swings even more in the direction of borrowing of woman's power and voice.

Shelley takes a different turn in envisioning the possibilities for music as it relates to gender. Using music to perform a sort of erasure of the everyday, rational world, his poetry repeatedly uses metaphor to obscure anchors from mental processes like logic and understanding to externalized concepts of nature. And Shelley's version of nature is imminently related to the idea of musical transcendence of rational contemplation, in the sense that Shelley's musical references fight against the binding of

the soul or mind to the everyday world, instead striving away from the thought patterns and associations of common, everyday existence. The ideal, disembodied, and ultimately unrealistic nature of the music Shelley imagines in numerous instances gives readers and critics pause. The impracticality and unreality of it makes it seem solipsistic or, even worse, sexist. Richard Leppert assesses the general masculine appreciation of music, which on the surface may seem to apply to Shelley's musical moments:

> Music's value for men was theoretical . . . music in this typical account was valued as pure abstraction, the absence of the very sound for which music might be thought to exist. . . . To connect a mathematics of music to the geometries of civil engineering and fighting, as Aubrey and many other writers among his contemporaries do, is to connect a nonsonoric, 'scientific' music to the exclusive male domain of state power and its politics. Through this connection music justifies its existence as a masculine and mental practice even as it makes claims to a radical utilitarianism. Music is valued, not for aesthetic reasons or for its inherent mathematical logic, but as a means to and end: it is a tool for domination . . . To operate most effectively, it must be silent. Indeed, music's sound is a threat to the instrumentalized variety of reason, to power, and to men." (65)

Shelley's musical ideals certainly follow the "nonsonoric" pattern mentioned here, and Shelley, as a male poet, could be accused of appropriating the power of music without the messy physical reality of it. But the physical reality of music at this time, with all of its formal, corporeal associations, is exactly what Shelley struggles against time and time again. In fact, he values music for largely aesthetic reasons, but also as a way to short circuit the idea of art as a "tool for domination." By using music to bind together disparate elements and evade formal and ideological constructs, Shelley attempts something that seems to work against exploitation or appropriation, though it plays in to the creation of a new, ironically more stifling, musical gender paradigm.

Shelley's skylark is one of the best examples of his unique musical aesthetic. Like Keats's nightingale, but taken to an even higher pitch, so to speak, the skylark sings in a dizzyingly metaphoric realm that defies form and body with its pointed lack of fixity. Instead of bringing time, space, and nature into conjunction, the fluidity of music here erases gender and physical, corporeal barriers important to Shelley's aesthetic of the vital significance of impermanence. Through the lark's mysterious, unearthly music, Shelley connects to a deliberately un-natural, and thus no longer concrete, aspect of artistic expression. The erasure of nature is evident in the opening lines of the poem:

> Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
> Bird thou never wert—
> That from heaven, or near it,
> Pourest thy full heart
> In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. (1-5)

Contradictions and ambiguities abound in this passage, from the bird that is not a bird (but still retains a heart, that can be spatially displaced and "poured" in music) to the heaven that is replaced with "near" heaven, and, finally, the "unpremeditated art." The impossible dream of art that is unpremeditated is one that the Romantics of this generation were especially taken with, as Angela Esterhammer describes in detail in her book on improvisation. The focus on art not controlled by the rational appears repeatedly in Shelley's musical poems, as the poet channels or taps in to this seemingly unmediated form of artistic expression. By creating an impossible ideal bird/not bird as the sonic focal point, Shelley pushes toward a plane of interaction that denies physical reality, replacing it with pure fantasy. The dash ending the second line enhances the

mysterious ambiguity of the bird's form, defying any expectations of further explanation or elucidation of the bird's physical state. Instead, its sonic dimensions are explored, but again, in calculatingly vague terms: "That from heaven or near it, / Pourest thy full heart / In profuse strains of unpremeditated art." Once again, the sound is impossible to quantify, and, unlike the Wordsworth example above, is not given a setting against which to react, and thus organize spatially. Instead, the adjective "full" describes not the listener's mind, but the bird's heart, emptied into its "art," and producing strains that are "profuse," making the space vast and fathomless (in contrast to Wordsworth's contained "vale profound"). The fact that the location from which the sound originates is not definable by "heaven," but instead must encompass "heaven or near it" exacerbates the spacelessness and shapelessness of the song, as does the enjambment between "heart" and "in." These two lines move with startling speed and force, offering hardly a space for pause in 17 syllables, and heightened by the unexpected change in line length, extending from three metrical feet in the first four lines to six in this final line (which becomes the pattern for the rest of the stanzas). The enjambment, speed, and variation in line length create an ambiguous, disorienting effect like the phenomenon described, but also creating an intricate pattern with rhyme, and a concrete form on the page that looks like a winged bird. This contradiction between spontaneous, unpremeditated art and highly wrought manifestation points to the problem seen above in Wordsworth's poem, that of romantic poetry's inevitable shortcoming: the impossibility of expressing the sublime and inexpressible. Shelley, instead of compromising in an attempt to capture a corrupted form of natural,

unpremeditated purity, draws even more attention to the paradoxical state of poetry's being. In this defiance of natural and physical formal barriers, Shelley builds up to a disavowal of physical forms, and an embrace of a more neo-platonic ideal of forms, but it is one that that includes oddly prescribed distinctions of gender roles.

As part of the rapid revision of form, similes in this poem are substituted for each other with dizzying rapidity, never stopping on any remotely concrete referent or quality of the ethereal singer or its song. At one point the bird is likened to "a cloud of fire" (8) and, in the next stanza, to "an unbodied joy whose race has just begun" (15). The cloud of fire offers such an elemental contradiction, replacing water vapor with its opposite, that destabilizes and eradicates any natural association of birds and clouds that might linger, effectively erasing the common conception of the bird's natural habitat, and substituting in its place another impossible abstraction. The "unbodied joy" in the following stanza acts in a similar way, taking an emotional state and separating it from any physical origin or consciousness. Unencumbered, the joy exists as a point of optimistic possibility "whose race has just begun," representing the freedom and potential of life and art liberated from material constraints. Defying species and all other corporeal distinctions, the musical creature transcends barriers of all kinds, at least within the lines of the poem.

The next set of stanzas offers a series of similes, moving from an idealized poet as hidden singer (reminiscent of the poet/ nightingale in his "Defence of Poetry") down a diminishing chain to a single flower. In each example, a quasi-artistic outpouring of some sort, be it sound, scent, or the glow worm's "aerial hue," creates a space, and

gives that space dimensions through the existence of ethereal, unseen presence, only to be swept away and replaced by the next wave of comparative analogy. The ensuing stanzas seek to access the power of the bird's song, though comparisons highlight the impossibility of such an occurrence even as they reach toward the imagined sublime creative power.

But then, in the final lines of the poem, the speaker/listener importunes the supernatural singer one last time:

> Teach me half the gladness
> That thy brain must know,
> Such harmonious madness
> From my lips would flow,
> The world should listen then—as I am listening now. (101-105)

It is alarming to note the lack of agency implied on the part of the speaker, who seeks to channel the song without any interactive thought or control, as a pure stream or uncontrolled "flow" of "harmonious madness." Even more removed from concrete reality, the song disappears entirely at this point, and is supplanted by a "gladness" that somehow contains the potential for this otherworldly song, imagined to exist whole and unsung within the brain of the bird/singer. At this point, the sound of the song is no longer audible, or even a song (instead abstracted to a "gladness"), allowing the speaker the fantasy that this abstracted idea can perhaps be transferred, at least by "half," into his body and lips. Like the "feel" of the star's presence, the song, which itself erases nature and defies acoustic sonoric dimensions of space, must disappear as well, to become an abstract idea that allows the possibility of an ideal communication between bird and poet, joy/gladness channels unmediated to "the world." Thus Shelley radically

rewrites Wordsworth's song as vital addition to nature; instead of assuming control and taking his "fill" of the song, as the eavesdropper does in "The Solitary Reaper" (thus retaining a version of the song + place in his brain and memory), in Shelley's poem it is the consciousness/brain of the bird/singer that is importuned to take the active role, using the speaker/poet/listener as a channel suggest a potential for deliberately disembodied, immaterial communication between the singer and speaker, and subsequently between the speaker and the all-embracing world.

"Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" makes frequent reference to music as a mysterious, powerful force that can have impact on the creative mind. The elaboration of this almost therapeutic, healing aspect is an addition to the already established musical aesthetic of "To A Skylark." Operating largely on a metaphorical level, here the idea under poetic contemplation is not music itself (though, depending on the arrangement of the stanzas, that is ultimately true for "Memory" as well) but intellectual beauty. The way that Shelley illuminates it, through metaphorical comparison to unconscious memory, is in keeping with the ideas explored there, though. As William Keach phrases it, "It is part of (Shelley's) effort to make language "vitally," not just dormantly, metaphorical . . . to show that it is the human mind that makes the metaphors by virtue of which we are able to reflect upon its operations" (*Shelley's Style*, 49). However, in the case of musical (and olfactory) memory, reflection on the operations of the mind is somewhat different, since the involuntary trigger of memory does not lend itself to Wordsworthian reflection and contemplation. Take, for example, these passages from "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty:"

It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,--
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,--
Like memory of music fled,--
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery. (6-12)

Thy light alone like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream. (32-36)

The use of the long dash at the end of lines, in the first of these excerpts, accents the sense of pushing toward the unknown, especially portentous in conjunction with "spread" and "fled." The treasured air of mystery in connection to memory is another example of Shelley's privileging of ideal communication, in the form of involuntary memory triggers—how the memory works to connect musical ideas to concrete aspects of life remains a mystery. Moreover, the idea of grace is repeatedly invoked in this poem, in a way that plays into the movement away from intellectual control. Traditional ideas of grace involves a surrender of personal control, and a trust in something beyond the self—as well as an acknowledgment that human thought is innately corrupt, and can only hope to transcend this flawed state by "grace." This is admittedly a heavily Protestant interpretation of grace, but one that would have been strongly associated with the term in this era. By substituting intellectual beauty for a traditional God figure, and endowing it with the power to "give grace and truth to life's unquiet dream," Shelley invokes the religious tropes of surrender of rational self-hood to something beyond the self, without concretizing and fleshing out the responsible

deity (who is no deity at all, but a mere incarnation of the creative spirit of art). As in *Prometheus Unbound,* there is a transcendence and move toward another plane of existence, but just what that higher level of thought and existence is like is left pointedly unspecified—one must imagine it for oneself. Clearly, reaching toward an undefined ideal as a solution to unsatisfactory gender markers is a flawed yet continuing theme.

Further development on the theme of grace and the idea of intellectual beauty occurs later in the poem, in lines 33-34, associated with music of the Aeolian harp. Hardly an uncommon artistic ideal in this era, the concept of music removed from the realm of human contact envisions the ultimate in un-gendered (as much as nature can be separated from gender at this time), non-corporeal artistic communication. In Shelley's reference here, we have moved from the inner workings of the unconscious mind to the realm of nature, to catch a glimpse at externalized, and thus further abstracted, intellectual beauty. But by viewing the spirit in a natural setting, Shelley gives it a universal aspect that can be sought after from a variety of vantage points. The agency in this passage is still diffuse, with "sent" and "driven" not attached to any discernible actor, but the ability of intellectual beauty to give rise to extraordinary and beneficial expression and exploration beyond everyday life comes through more powerfully as a result, since the true power of it (here, at least) is that is has no discernible comparison. The layers of figurative language do not obscure the power of this creative force, but instead celebrate the sublime grace of its ultimate incomparable nature. Once again, Shelley formally and metaphorically strives against habitual patterns of thought. The rapid push against line ending pauses in "music by the night-wind sent / Through strings

of some still instrument" avoids space for "collecting one's thoughts" forcing a suspense of rationalization and normalizing thought patterns, instead insisting upon being carried over trippingly onto another precipice, with no concrete destination. The string of metaphors ends with "life's unquiet dream," a reminder of the restless, unthinking, everyday pattern of existence against which he struggles, but in still frustratingly un-concrete terms. For Shelley the infamous atheist, it is interesting to note that the lack of an agent attached to the word "sent" is highlighted by end of line placement. In this disavowal of agency and form, it almost seems that he is pushing and seeking to stimulate thoughts of spiritual agency, but in a backhand, almost subliminal way—the speed acts against immediate contemplation, almost lending itself to recollection in memory after the fact (like the way that the "memory of music fled" functions, perhaps).

The poems to Jane Williams, among Shelley's last compositions, are further examples of feminine music—though here the instrument is the untraditional, decidedly risqué guitar, and the singer is married (not an unmarried girl displaying herself through a thinly veiled display of artistic accomplishment). The unconventional nature of this display marks Shelley's lack of interest in the common musical display. Further disrupting the norm here is the fact that, at least in the case of "To Jane," the setting is outdoors, which we are given in the first line: "The keen stars were twinkling." One could even speculate that Shelley's seeming aversion to music early in life, as De Palacio reports, could instead be an aversion to the patriarchal model of unmarried women being compelled to make submissive parlor room display of their abilities to

"execute" music, or carry out the intentions of another, not to mention having to place themselves in the role of physical spectacle for the ogling glance of any men present. Shelley's frequent personal history of intervention into the lives of young women he sees as "enslaved" would support this possibility.

In contrast to the poems about intangible, almost abstracted music, "To Jane, with a Guitar" offers a more intimate involvement with music. Though it is, strictly speaking, a love poem, the fact that Shelley fashions himself as Ariel shows a marked lack of physical and sexual being, as a bodiless, virtually sexless spirit, with a name suggestive of "air." The master/slave relationship that he asserts (in his idiosyncratic reference to *The Tempest*) also disavows traditional gender roles. The reference to the guitar as a "slave of music" undermines the idea of musician as slave of music, and woman as physically enchained to the piano for molding and shaping. Once again transcending the physical, along with disavowing the idea of woman bending herself to the will of instrument, composer, and patriarchal order, Shelley instead insists that it is Miranda/Jane who might "teach" the instrument, that her potential power over the instrument is unique and distinctively powerful. This musical power is usually only associated with men, in the roles of composer or professional. Perhaps suggesting something of this destabilizing instinct, the long, attenuated sentences of this poem, in combination with the short lines, create a sense of uneasiness and restlessness, in combination with the lack of rhythmic regularity and end-stopping. Like the musical excerpts from *Prometheus Unbound*, the figures who interact are markedly non-physical. From "make the delighted spirit glow" to "like a living meteor," body and

biologically fixed attributes are deliberately de-accentuated. Instead of the traditional staples of love poetry, Shelley undermines expectation. He instead gives us a poem that celebrates Jane/Miranda's power over him (or any listener), and one that not only references, but enlists the assistance of Jane's common-law husband, Edward (as Ferdinand, Miranda's love interest, no less). The suggestion of a hidden attraction between Miranda and Ariel, though, piques interest more than the acknowledged romance between Shakespeare's lead, while accentuating the doomed nature of the attraction. The gift of the guitar is not so much a present with "strings attached" as an empowering supportive gesture, and encouragement to abandon the physical for the ever-changing, ephemeral world of music/nature. The substitution of nature imagery should, by this time, be no surprise, though. Reference to the physical body of the "man" in question--for Ariel isn't a man at all, really--is only mentioned once, as "a body like a grave." Like Shelley's near-demonization of physical, sensual cravings in *Prometheus Unbound*, this denigrates the body as a barrier to the transcendent mutability that Shelley insists upon and celebrates. The phrasing of line 39, "In a body like a grave---" is complicated, though, because it is rhythmically end stopped, unlike many lines before and after, symbolically enacting the irrevocable end of the grave, but attenuated with the en-dash after grave, as if reaching beyond it (and toward the "song tomorrow at the end of the sentence?). Like we will see later in *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley's metaphor propelled transcendence of the corrupt presents as an unreachable, sublime opposite to the "safe" alternative—shimmering in the mist, shrouded by abstractions but offering a tantalizing glimpse of something better, and always just out

of reach.

As for “To Jane (Keen Stars Were Twinkling),”the arrangement of the lines in this ariette instills a sense of almost random to-and-fro movement, which reveals itself to be an outward moving repeated pattern, entered mid-arc. The short last lines in each set often contribute to this sense of ephemeral incompleteness, especially as they are the beginning of a new set of outward movement, even as they end the syntactical units. That Shelley himself refers to it as an “ariette” in his note to Jane creates a musical undertone, which is perpetuated by the form and content of the poem. The arrangement of lines, with a 6-syllable line followed by a ten syllable and then a 2 syllable line repeated, gives a lilting triple rhythmic tone to the piece, almost a halting waltz rhythm. The meter feels more like an erratic waltz than a true anapestic pattern. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the individual metrical feet are often broken up between lines, making their hold on each other tenuous at best. As a musical quality, though, the waltz rhythm is able to hold together the ariette in a way that is able to go beyond the poetic structure (thus illustrating the musical transcendence that the text imagines.) The phrases suggested, with the six-syllable first line and the twelve-syllable second and third lines combined (which is supported by the repeated enjambment) is something like a two-bar antecedent phrase followed by a four-bar consequent phrase. Even this is unorthodox, since traditional melodic structure is oriented toward four bar phrases. But this evasion of orthodox pattern echoes the message of the poem, and the evasion of traditional forms in gendered relationships. Near rhymes at “heaven” and “given,” as well as “scatter” and “later” reinforce this. The difference between poetry and song—

and between rhythm and meter—could not be clearer. The first line of each set of three is a rough, sometimes almost impossible fit with the meter, which illustrates the imperfection of forms for the figures described—from the guitar notes to the stars. The element of Jane's engagement joined with these elements and the ear of the listener works to combine and undo these disappointingly unfinished forms; the rhythm and meter fall into place as the forms combine, with musical smoothing of edges.

Like the other anti-blazon love poetry in Shelley's writings, this ariette never refers to a physical quality; neither the beloved nor the lover is conceived of as a physical being. The first line reference to twinkling stars fairly begs for a comparison to Jane's eyes, but none follows. Instead, the power of music, here associated with Jane entirely, enables the transcendence to "some world far from ours, / Where music and moonlight and feeling / Are one" (22-24). The rejection of traditional gender norms is evident in the relinquishing of power and volition at "Though the sound overpowers / Sing again, with your dear voice revealing / A tone" (19-21). The speaker's volition, indeed, his very presence in the poem is markedly lacking at this moment, with the implied "me," the assumed object of "overpowers" left unstated. The spiritual (what Shelley calls "sacred") nature of the poem denies the body in favor of the emotional and spiritual, which is something of a violation of the traditional mind/body divide; emotion was typically associated with the feminine and physical, while reason was associated with the mind, soul, and the masculine identity. Shelley violates this in his final unification of "music, moonlight, and feeling" in an ethereal, bodiless unity. Jane's power to ensoul the guitar also crosses the line between music (in the feminine column)

and soul (in the masculine). The various vehicles that Shelley employs to transmit Jane's music are pointedly abstract and bodiless as they point to the genderless unity at the end. From "the dews of your melody scatter / Delight" to the "dear voice revealing / A tone / Of some world far from ours" (20-22), the music in this ariette is otherworldly and ephemeral, encouraging movement beyond the physical. Like the music in *Prometheus Unbound*, Jane's music here is able to sweep away formal boundaries or constructions, allowing the lovers to occupy a genderless, bodiless, formless space in which perfect unity can be achieved. Also like *Prometheus Unbound*, the inability to describe this space in anything other than identification with music and feeling (and moonlight) reveals the limits of such an idealization.

Music as a transformative force runs through *Prometheus Unbound*, and is not limited to acts III and IV, as we sometimes assume. Paul Vatalaro neatly encapsulates the way that music works in this concise (if somewhat oversimplified) description: "In Prometheus Unbound, Shelley presents a sexualized version of cosmic rejuvenation. If the first and second acts represent conditions governed primarily by logos and jouissance, respectively, then third and fourth acts represent phantasmic versions of what might happen if these two informing principles were to merge" (*Shelley's Music* 67) The idea of "merging" and synthesizing old governing principles to create new, if unfathomable, alternatives is key here. Take for example, this passage from Act II:

> He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
> Which is the measure of the universe;
> And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
> Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
> Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;

> And music lifted up the listening spirit
> Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
> Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound; (2, 4, 72-79)

The way that music figures undergoes a shift over the course of the drama, but some things about it do not change. Shelley's mythology of creation (according to Asia's report) depends heavily on music as a creative and unifying force. The music here is not physical, though; like many other instances, music here is an ideal communication that shows no residue or traces of bodily functions or physical imprint. Instead, the mind acts independent of the body, with no reference to physicality or gender. The "harmonious mind," now given the power of speech, and through it thought, produces music through a seemingly natural, almost involuntary act of "pouring forth." Music is personified in the sense that it acts, lifting the listening spirit, and maintains a dynamic but stable presence as a path/ocean upon which the "listening spirit" can walk. However, the semi-personified presence of music is not gendered, nor is speech or science. In fact, the referents in this section are typically diffuse and gender neutral, from "listening spirit" to "harmonious mind." Both of these are referred to with the gender neutral "it" later in the passage, as well. The two incidents of enjambment between lines are portentous, propelling the action of these ambiguous entities forward, as if to formally illustrate the corresponding verbs, "poured" and "lifted." The fact that the enjambed line breaks occur after "mind" and "spirit" push past the boundaries of gender or materiality that players in a scene might be generally expected to adhere to, forcing past further definition in the rapid motion of disembodied action. The actions associated with speech and music stand out here: while speech acts deliberately,

"creating" thought, music lifts and is "poured forth" from the harmonious mind, and later provides a surface upon which the spirit can walk. None of the actions or demonstrated powers of music are especially decisive, deliberate, or even voluntary. Music either bursts out or acts passively, but it neither creates nor acts in a dominant or forceful way, like Science in the third line of this passage.

The well-known song at the end of the second act is another example of sound that eradicates and displaces, even dislocates traditional organization of physical forms:

> . . . like one in slumber bound,
> Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
> Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound: (82-84)
> . . .
> And we sail on, away, afar,
> Without a course, without a star,
> But, by the instinct of sweet music driven; (88-90)
> . . .
> The boat of my desire is guided:
> Realms where the air we breathe is love,
> Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
> Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above. (94-97)

Again, the music featured here is removed from poetic control by the remove of the dream image, with "like one in slumber bound." The unassigned power of music, in purely abstract form (there is no defining feature described, this is strictly an ideal, not an actuality) reverberates far beyond the speaker of this lyric represented as the bound figure, as the waves ripple outward from the slumberer, growing ever wider until we find ourselves in "a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound." The expansive power of music to unfold in the mind and as an externalized, abstract idea is formally depicted here, as well as metaphorically, with the move from imagery depicting an enclosure into

a dream state opening into a vast ocean. The base elements of vastness and powerful, expansive thought, in the form of music, carry and support the ethereal gliding of this seemingly rootless lyric. The rootlessness is an integral part of the image, though, tied to the idea of human conscious thought. The speaker, as representative human-like consciousness, does not act as an individual with intellectual dominion over her situation. Instead, she "floats down" and sails "away, afar, / Without a course, without a star, / But by the instinct of sweet music driven." The near rhyme between "heaven" from the line before this passage and "driven" amplifies the feeling of music guiding the speaker into a realm beyond what is known—for what can one imagine beyond, and equated with but not quite rhyming with heaven? By suggesting but forcing beyond the idea of heaven, the destination is once again sublimely mysterious as we are propelled into the domain of the unknown "without a course, without a star." Forcing past familiar markers and common symbols of reckoning and understanding, Shelley pushes toward a transcendent understanding of life, outside of the realm of understood life and patterns of thought, once again. The invoking of "instinct" is an interesting one—instinct would seem to imply the all-too-familiar habits of mind he strives against—but here the instinct guiding the lovers is the "instinct of sweet music," giving the abstract song human dimensions in the form of an instinct, or involuntary behavior. Without a significant pause to mark this incongruity, the remaining image of surrendering to instinct beyond the self lingers instead, along with the powerful force behind the idea of being "driven," though significantly in passive voice, postponing and attenuating assignment of agency. The gradually lengthening lines in these passages enhance the

movement beyond the realm of the known, as well as the desired loss of control on the part of reason and compartmentalizing logic. The movement from "I" pronouns to the collective "we" is another marker of a move away from individual, physical, gendered existence into in idealized, musically inflected collective.

The world of immortals and mortals alike undergoes a transformation during the third act, as Prometheus prophecies of the ensuing change:

> The echoes of the human world, which tell
> Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
> And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
> Itself the echo of the heart, and all
> That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
> And lovely apparitions,--dim at first,
> Then radiant, as the mind arising bright
> From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
> Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
> The gathered rays which are reality--
> Shall visit us the progeny immortal
> Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
> And arts, though unimagined, yet to be;
> The wandering voices and the shadows these
> Of all that man becomes, the mediators
> Of that best worship, love, by him and us
> Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
> More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
> And, veil by veil, evil and error fall. (Act III, iii 44-62)

This speech of Prometheus's illuminates the idealization of human transformation, in highly platonic sounding terms. The veils falling away, as the forms (or here "shapes and sounds") approach perfection are unmistakable. It is odd that formal qualities counter content in the end stopping after the word "free;" limiting the figurative movement of the music and the heart just as they attain supposed liberty. It is also

troubling that these newly re-fashioned forms are identified as “man,” but then, they grow/ more fair and soft” in qualities approaching femininity. The enjambment after “grow” illustrates not only the growth out of formal pattern, but also the gender mutating qualities that follow, joining “fair and soft” with “wise and kind,” to become an amalgamation of ideal gender norms. The surprising aspect of this is the categorization of “Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy” as arts, while music is identified as an inseparable part of man, “Itself the echo of the heart,” which is freed with the coming apocalypse. The sounds described, from “the echoes of the human world” to “dove eyed pity’s murmured pain” and “the low voice of love” together act as a sort of natural music, especially when joined by music at the end of the line. The unbalanced stress pattern at the beginning of line 46, with an almost pyrrhic lack of accent on “of the” followed by a light equal stress on “low voice” serve not only to illustrate the hushed tones, but also the unregulated, “natural” freedom now allowed to the human music. The hypermetric syllable at the end of music shows it to be slightly out of joint, though, along with the juxtaposition with “pain” before it. Music, as part of humanity, still bears flaws, though the flaws shall “grow / More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind.” The fact that Shelley separates music from the arts gives a clue about the transformative power he invests it with. Unlike the externalized, fashioned work of painting, sculpture, and even poetry, music here is revealed as an internal force, always already present in man from the start, now made free.

Act IV of *Prometheus Unbound* has something of a different tone to it; written in the fall of 1819, after the *Cenci* and the Peterloo Massacre, it comes off as an

insistent moment of optimistic celebration, though the moment, and the change, that it celebrates is precarious and still only partially defined. Shelley celebrates musical freedom and new growth early in the act:

> The pine boughs are singing
> Old songs with new gladness,
> The billows and fountains
> Fresh music are flinging
> Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
> The storms mock the mountains
> With the thunder of gladness. (47-53)

The insistence upon newness, freshness, the ability of song to sweep away the dross of the old regime is prominent. "Old songs with new gladness" is odd, though—why old songs? The perseverance of the repetition, with the idea of the "old songs" and the repetition of "gladness" as the end rhyme for lines 48 and 53 provide something of a contrast to the middle of the stanza: "The billows and fountains / Fresh music are flinging." (49-50). The fact that the nature produced "fresh music" is "like notes from a spirit" but not actually music from an otherworldly source acts as a sort of musical grounding, in comparison with the previous musical descriptions. Music in Act II, in the end of scene v, for example, is a sort of Deus ex Machina that sweeps in and effects a great change—it is not naturally occurring music, but ethereal, otherworldly musical intervention. Here the music is earthly, as the elements of the world take on their own appropriation of the mold-breaking catalystic music.

Song often works to transcend rational thought and material reality. From Act IV, the celebratory chorus announces: "We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep, / We have known the voice of love in dreams, / We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—"

(65-67) The chorus declaration that, “we have heard the lute of Hope in sleep” stretches the illusion of a “pure” musical/artistic communication beyond the individual mind to encompass a collective dream. While there is a sense of potential prophecy being delivered in the dream vision, individual formal cohesion comes apart--meaning is lost in the collective—the source of inspiration is difficult to obscure and leave in the background when all have the same dream vision. A musical interlude from late in the act presents an astronomical, grand scale “music of the spheres,” (well, in this case, a singular sphere . . . or is it?) but with a resonance with the transformation that occurs in human life:

> And from the other opening in the wood
> Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony
> A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
> Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
> Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
> Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
> Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
> Sphere within sphere; and every space between
> Peopled with unimaginable shapes
> Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep
> Yet each intertranspicuous, and they whirl
> Over each other with a thousand motions
> Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning
> And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
> Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on---
> Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
> Intelligible words and music wild.---(Act IV, i, 236-252)

The telling irregularity of the meter illustrates the volatility of the phenomenon described, with at least 8 of the 17 lines opening with trochaic substitutions, and lines that look disorganized in length, but actually conform to 10 syllables each, with the

exception of two 11 syllable insertions. The form coheres insistently beneath the aberrant gyrations of the mass. The music, this time combined with light, once again functions with an otherworldly freedom from form or constraint, as "through all its mass / Flow, as through empty space, music and light: / Ten thousand orbs involving and involved" portrays music using an enjambment that syntactically works to create suspense by postponing the main verb and the subject that allow this crucial sentence to start to come together and cohere. The colon at the end of the line acts as something of a twin spotlight, with light coming from each in inter-mingling pools. The "whirlwind harmony" that forces enjambment and defies form gives music another catalystic role in this out-of-control object. Hearkening back to an agency-less Aeolian harp driven by natural wind and not human breath, the "whirlwind harmony" can hardly be reminiscent of the familiar, carefully wrought musical harmony of the day, with the definite tonal structure and organization that it inevitably employed. "Intelligible words and music wild" also alludes to an unreal, or at least never yet heard sort of music, but it is strange that the "music wild" is accompanied by "intelligible words." The two don't seem to go together, do they? If the gender association of language as masculine and music as feminine is brought to bear here, this works against the form/stereotype shattering; even without the gender associations, it is strange to employ these adjectives in a seemingly binary comparison. But if we see the "intelligible words," couched with "kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones" as a sort of last marker of coherence holding back from total chaos, the potential for understanding held out by the "intelligible words" acts in a way not unlike the form of the verse beneath the many irregularities, giving a

sort of guiding light through the seeming random disorder.

The idea at the heart of the mass of spheres, the "Ten thousand orbs involving and involved" that are "each intertranspicuous" create the sort unfathomable dissolution and recreation of form that makes *Prometheus Unbound* seem to be such a radical rewriting of gender, and form as a whole. The very idea of "intertranspicuous"-ness, a word almost certainly coined by Shelley (OED lists only *Prometheus Unbound* under the reference for this work), is an idea and a word that reaches for a formless formal description. The term "transpicuous" itself probably hearkens back to Milton.[5] While Milton's use of the term describes air, something that we understand to be "transpicious" anyway, it does make a destabilizing connection between the sun and moon that connects the two bodies, usually thought of as gendered opposites that nevertheless interact and depend on each other (well, the feminine/moon more than the masculine/sun). In Milton's imagining of a separate light as authority governing the sun and moon equally, the hierarchy of sun over moon comes into question. Shelley takes things further, of course, imagining a fully interactive, constantly transforming phenomenon that defies organization or hierarchy of any kind. The lines in-between the form defying "involving and involved" and "intertranspicuous" descriptions add even more complexity to the imagined composite shape:

> Sphere within sphere; and every space between
> Peopled with unimaginable shapes,

[5] *Paradise Lost* Book VIII, line 140 – 143 "What if that light / Sent from her through the wide transpicuous aire / To the terrestrial Moon be as a Starr / Enlightning her by Day, as she by Night / This Earth?"

Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep, (43-45)

These lines illustrate the crowding, teeming quality of the mass with the erratic stress pattern that includes an extra stress in (arguably) all three lines. The "unimaginable" nature of the shapes, and the "lampless deep" work together to push the imagination beyond that which can be formally contained and conveyed in language or penetrated by light. The Shelleyan insistence on mutability comes to the fore with "the force of self-destroying swiftness" near the end of the passage.[6] The not necessarily negative assignment of agency to the "self" in this destruction is a part of the perpetually apocalyptic ideal that lingers in the wake of this poem.

The lingering reminders of how these works often ended up circulating, as excerpts in pseudo-literary "annuals" and collections with names like "Forget Me Not," "Literary Souvenir," and "The Gem," are likely to leave something of a bad taste in the mouth of many purists. Taken out of context, juxtaposed with their less radical counterparts are these mold-breaking works reduced to a sort of kitsch, once breaking the mold and now broken themselves, now situated as diminished, familiarized household pets? Perhaps. Adorno says a great deal on this subject; not the least of which being: "In music, at any rate, all real kitsch has the character of a model. It offers the outline and draft of objectively compelling, pre-established forms that have lost their content in history, and for which the unfettered artist, cast adrift, is not able to fashion

[6] O'Neill comment's on Shelley's habit of redefining at the risk of dissolution in *Romanticism and the Self Conscious Poem:*"There is, in fact, in Shelley a dislike of reaching conclusions. Conclusion, however optimistic, define, limit, intimate mortality; hence the appeal for the poet of endings on the verge of redefining, at times undermining, the poems of which they are part" (131).

the content in his own" (*Essays on Music*, 501). For an even closer to home reference, we can look a few paragraphs later:

> The social moment is essentially constitutive of it. For by serving up the past formal entities as contemporary, it has the social function—to deceive people about their true situation, to transfigure their existence, to allow intentions that suit some power of other to appear to them in a fairy-tale glow. All kitsch is essentially ideology. This, in the nineteenth century, musical kitsch transfigured the existence of bourgeois and proletarians, who are absorbed in class struggle, by means of a romanticism that, once it had died out as great art, was good enough to transform the living room into a salon with *Elilland* and *The Trumpeter of Sachingen.*" (502)

The movement of Shelley's ideas into easily digestible chunks included in Annuals, appearing alongside the likes of his old friend Felicia Hemans, not to mention Byron and other contemporaries, is one that could easily be characterized as kitsch. But perhaps de-naturalized kitsch does not tell the whole story of popular contemporary circulation of Shelley's poetry. Katherine Harris's article "Forget Me Not!" treats the subject of literary annuals, and their association with training feminine conduct, at length, making the following point:

> The annuals represented materially a luxury and, ideologically, an idealized femininity. Young ladies entertained their guests with the literary annuals and gained a voice through this representation of femininity. However, the feminine voice within the annuals was only momentarily ideal. The annuals soon became a site of subversive femininity, where warfare and the masculine hero were not celebrated. The British annuals signaled a new class of readers who were empowered through both their own economic demand and an alternative view of femininity—not to mention the space afforded the female author's variant voice. (9)

This makes a point about possible subversive use of annuals, and a different way of looking at them. The vision of gender in some of the poetry in these annuals is certainly

idealized, though the different versions of "ideal" taken out of context create something less diffuse and more hyper-real than any one of these poet's work taken alone.

Chapter Two: Austen's Musical Women and the Music as Shaky Ground

Land and the visible markers identifying the landed gentry are a prevailing theme in many of Jane Austen's novels. But instead of the cultural marker of owning land, giving a sense of moral groundedness, it is an unfortunate lack of physical property that typifies Austen's musical heroines and other musical characters; a phenomenon that I refer to here as "groundlessness." Transience and shifting states of once familiar landmarks are the province of Marianne Dashwood and Anne Elliot, not to mention Jane Fairfax and the Bennet sisters. They stand in contrast to more financially secure characters, like Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her daughter Anne, and even Emma Woodhouse, whose lack of musical discipline indicates that she knows she can get away with not exerting herself too much in this area of personal development. Austen's less privileged characters are usually the ones who turn their focus to music, often finding that they must develop "accomplishments" to compensate for their unstable circumstances. The ability of music to go beyond the mere attraction of a spouse, though, is what I focus on in this chapter. In Austen's hands, (or those of her musical characters) music is able to become more than a mere accomplishment, working instead as a resource. Characters like Mary Bennet and Anne Elliot use music to recuperate some social foundation for their unstable circumstances, by creating a landscape of sound. These novels offer an alternative reading of the value of musical accomplishment for women, and the variety of ways it can be employed, which contrasts with the conventional wisdom of the day.

While Shelley carefully cultivates a musical spacelessness, giving a mystical power to the ephemeral effect of music, Austen's heroines are much more at the mercy of the groundless, transient world that music evokes. For Shelley, this ephemerality contributes to the idealized unreality of his worlds, but in Austen, the shaky ground that music allows is a fragile, but still viable way to ameliorate the social situations in which they operate, or (in some cases) to assert power and control in the drawing room and home concert space, a domain where it is (arguably) lacking for young women of the time. Music functioning as a spacer, unfolding to exert itself on the space in which it sounds, may seem implausible, but it is something that is still recognized today. It is no surprise that two of the more prominent popular musicological studies of this phenomenon write about the way music can work in the favor of disenfranchised communities within the world today. From the music of k d lang acting as a deployable "safe space" in the 1990's for lesbians to communicate and briefly escape the inhibitions of the closet, as Gill Valentine writes about in "Creating transgressive space,"[7] to the creation of "hip hop architecture" for African American musicians claiming their own space in urban areas,[8] music is still a tool that is often wielded by those that seek to safely navigate the dominant culture of the day while maintaining independence. The same can be said for Austen's musical heroines. The way that music asserts itself on a given space can be explained through the work of philosopher and theorist Henri Lefebvre, in his work "The Production of Space." He describes space as a

[7] Gill Valentine, Creating Transgressive Space: The Music of kd lang, 1995, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers

[8] Craig L Wilkins, "(W)rapped space: The Architecture f Hip-Hop" Sept 2000, Journal of Architectural Education

"social product," explaining that space is experienced, or "lived" through the actions and interactions of the people within it. As a result, the physical areas in which we live are largely constructed by our actions and relationships, both with each other and with the objects within them, though we assume that they are concrete and mutually understood:

> Vis-à-vis lived experience, space is neither a mere 'frame', after the fashion of the frame of a painting, nor a form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it. Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure. (94)

He addresses the way that music, and other social art forms, like theatre, function as "monumental" works, exerting influence over social systems: "In and through the work in space, social practice transcends the limitations by which other 'signifying practices', and hence the other arts, including those texts known as 'literary', are bound; in this way a consensus, a profound agreement, is achieved. . . . A spatial action overcomes conflicts, at least momentarily, even though it does not resolve them" (221). This fleeting capacity for transformation within musical space is what I want to explore with regards to Austen's disenfranchised female musicians. The aspect of sound as a presence, shaping and altering the gender dynamic along with the space, if only for a brief time, is an aspect of music worth considering.

Music operates in a few different ways within Austen's novels, the primary function being a protective shell for the woman positioned at the piano. From Anne Elliot to Jane Fairfax, and even Mary Bennet, music operates as a protective buffer, as well as a bridge, if you will, that can be accessed to extend the

"accomplished" woman's sphere of influence/safety in social situations. I consider the way this extension of space operates, from a variety of tenuous social positions. The musical operations of Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* are slightly different, for while she still finds herself in a socially tenuous position on the marriage market, she deploys music in a more aggressive, and less self-protecting manner. Nevertheless, she skillfully manipulates the same premises regarding the way music can function at this time to parlay into greater influence and security for the marriageable young woman. Finally, music is highlighted as a way to identify individuals of true taste and discernment (like Anne Elliot, Fanny Price, and Colonel Brandon, to name a few) as distinct from the rest of "refined" society, most of whom merely pose as patrons of the arts. Though the pianoforte is a relatively new phenomenon at the time Austen is writing, it is one that quickly becomes embedded into the social fabric of the day, especially for the striving middle class. As Burgan says in her article "Heroines at the Piano," the piano and the musical training of young women was less a matter of creating an artistic outlet, than a display of obedience: "piano expertise was a commodity in the marriage market, a form of necessary self-discipline, or an innocent entertainment in an otherwise vacuous existence" (61). She also notes that the piano itself, and the space it occupies, function more within the social sphere than the artistic, arguing that "the popularity of the piano as an instrument for the English home had less to do with such genius (as Schubert's home music compositions) than with such matters as women's education, the upward mobility of the middle class, and the status of the bourgeois household as the locus for all legitimate general sociability" (56). An interesting turn in this phenomenon also lies

in the fact that the ability of music to create a space, or compensate for a lack of material grounding, does not end with the resolution of the marriage plot. Musical women like Mrs. Weston, who marry into property, or unmarried daughters past "marriageable" age, like Anne Elliot (or Austen herself), are often called on to use their musical talents to provide a space for courtship in the form of dances. While married women like the insufferable Mrs. Elton are free to let their musical inclinations languish (and risk the mild censure this may provoke), these women are still called into service, using their powers for the gratification of others.

Certainly there have been other thoughtful considerations of Austen's music, from Patrick Piggott's *The Innocent Diversion* to Wallace's *Jane Austen and Mozart*, not to mention Gillen D'Arcy Wood's recent chapter on *Emma* in *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain*, and Trillini's chapter on the pianoforte from *The Gaze of the Listener: English Representations of Domestic Music-Making*. But this project is not focused on Austen biographically, as Wood and Wallace both do; neither is it married to the idea of making novelist and composer fit together. Instead, I will look at the ways that the women of these novels go against type, in this moment of suspension between the expectation of women to "do their duty" by creating a soothing musical atmosphere, and the musical femme fatales of the decades after Austen's works, like Charlotte Bronte's Blanche Ingram or Braddon's musically ambiguous Lady Audley. Trillini goes into some detail about the "accomplishment trap" idea that forms around musical women struggling for power, saying that "the accomplishment trap worked better because their lack of musical training made men more likely to fall for the

'decorated screen' of accomplishments, 'behind which all defects in domestic knowledge, in taste, judgment, and literature, and talents which make an elegant companion, are creditably concealed'" (89). The shifting expectations (and dangers) of musical women contribute to the tenuous foundation of the situations I examine. While early in the nineteenth-century, the threat of musical women is less prominent than that of foreign "interlopers" and virtuosos, this situation escalates as drawing room music becomes more prominent, and women musicians become more serious about music as an art, as well as more proficient. The power that women wield in the deployment of music is perceived as more sinister later in the century, but there is a sense of how women can use music to their advantage in Austen's novels.

Starting backwards at *Persuasion*, we can see that rather than making music a focal point, Austen employs music with a light hand, as an indirect illumination to reveal other aspects of the spaces she examines, and the social and situational moments that she captures and shapes. Music still functions as a social lubricant, allowing interactions and bringing people and places together, but in a less obvious way than many other social functions. As Gillen D'Arcy Wood states, in *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, Austen's novels face forces such as "the social displacement of characters, the dubious operations of conspicuous consumption, and a class system in flux" (166). Music functions to smooth some of these edges, even as they are brought to the surface and confronted.

The first glimpse of music offered in this novel is not an actual performance, but the space in which music occurs. As Anne establishes herself as a guest in Charles and

Mary's cottage, she becomes accustomed to spending a certain amount of time at the "great house," the residence of Charles's parents, the Musgroves. As a frequent visitor, she makes comment (through the free indirect narration) on incongruities in personal relations and home furnishings:

> To the Great House accordingly they went, to sit the full half hour in the old-fashioned square parlour, with a small carpet and shining floor, to which the present daughters of the house were gradually giving the proper air of confusion by a grand piano forte and a harp, flower-stands and little tables placed in every direction. Oh! could the originals of the portraits against the wainscot, could the gentlemen in brown velvet and the ladies in blue satin have seen what was going on, have been conscious of such an overthrow of all order and neatness! The portraits themselves seemed to be staring in astonishment. The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement. The father and mother were in the old English style, and the young people in the new. (77-78)

The space described here, an "old-fashioned" room in a prestigious old house, is clearly at odds with the furnishings within. More than that, though, the people are at odds as well, with one half of the family (the older half) in what is referred to as an 'old English style" and the younger generation described later as having "modern minds and manners." Instead of depicting a sweeping social change, the new and old are compelled to coexist in uneasy harmony. But here we have juxtaposed more than just the older Musgroves and their modern children, for another generation of customs and social ideals look on in the form of portraits on the wall. Austen distinguishes between the importance of achieving equilibrium amid relevant though disparate social groups while gently mocking the imagined disapproval of long past, irrelevant lookers-on.[9]

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[9] In this way Austen diverges from Edmund Burke's prevailing valorization of long established custom over new styles of living.

The narrator pointedly reserves judgment on the success of the "modern" improvements of society (though allowing for the possibility, with the skillfully placed "perhaps") in the last two lines of this excerpt, instead favoring a balance between the old and the new.[10]

Now that the stage has been set, and the room in which the music happens has been sufficiently impressed on the mind of the reader as a meeting ground for tradition and innovation, the next step is to introduce music, so that it can function as a necessary social lubrication to bring disparate forces into harmony. And so it does. At one point not long after the introduction of the parlour room, we are given an example of an evening of entertainment: "The party at the Great House was sometimes increased by other company. The neighborhood was not large, but the Musgroves were visited by every body, and had more dinner parties, and more callers, more visitors by invitation and by chance, than any other family. They were more completely popular" (83). This passage directly compares the Musgroves and Anne's socially superior family, the Elliots; the egalitarian aspect of this gathering paints the Musgroves in a much more favorable light, though. The social world this less established family inhabits is clearly much less studied and deliberate, with ceremony playing little part in these casual

[10] Further commentary on the precarious but necessary balance and compromise of ideals comes just before this passage, in Anne's internal critique of Mary's highly fraught relationship with her in-laws the Musgroves: "Anne had always thought such a style of intercourse highly imprudent; but she had ceased to endeavour to check it, from believing that, though there were on each side continual subjects of offence, neither family could now do without it" (74). I would like to draw attention to the last phrase in particular, to point out the importance placed on balance and compromise, and, even more, on intercourse between groups that do not agree, in order to prevent isolation and deeper misunderstanding. Both passages also point to the importance of retarding the forces of social change, so that the transformation is not revolutionary, but a slow evolution toward change, incorporating tradition instead of eradicating it.

"chance" encounters. These gatherings are inclusive rather than exclusive:

> The girls were wild for dancing; and the evenings ended, occasionally, in an unpremeditated little ball. There was a family of cousins within a walk of Uppercross, in less affluent circumstances, who depended on the Musgroves for all their pleasures: they would come at any time, and help play at any thing, or dance any where; and Anne, very much preferring the office of musician to a more active post, played country dances to them by the hour together: a kindness which always recommended her musical powers to the notice of Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove more than any thing else, and often drew this compliment -- "Well done, Miss Anne! very well done indeed! Lord bless me! how those little fingers of yours fly about!" (83)

Echoing Shelley's language (and, to an extent, Wordsworth's as well) with the "unpremeditated" musical event, this passage brings out the role that music plays within this precariously balanced social space. As mentioned earlier in the novel, Anne is perfectly aware that the Musgroves do not appreciate her superior musicianship; this instance is no exception (though this acknowledgement is considerably better than the usual deliberate snubs and biting remarks that Anne expects from her family, when they are not ignoring her). The fact that the visual manifestation of dexterity is what garners their notice is an indication of the status of music as something very far from the ideal of "mind elevating organization of sound," at least in this household. Instead, music is a means to an end: giving an excuse for marriageable young men and women to come into physical and social contact with each other in the form of dancing.

The description of Anne's role as musician makes this even clearer. Her performance is not described as an artistic expression, but instead serving at a "post," fulfilling a duty in the "office" of musician. Music here enables a rare connection between the gender spheres, in the situation of the dancers, as well as between differing

social classes, and between Anne and her sister's in-laws, as she provides them the "kindness" of facilitating their social engagement (thus creating opportunity for more intimate family interactions to boot). Music, in this space that exists between two social orders, is able to temporarily fill in the cracks, enabling people and objects to come together in (albeit fleeting) harmonious intercourse. They may not understand each other completely (witness Mrs. Musgrove's ironic appreciation of Anne's artistic expression), but music is able to weave an aural tapestry of connection and accord between these people, who, by their collective belief (or suspension of disbelief) that music can serve this ideological function, enable it to do so.

The hodge-podge of old and new in which the Musgroves entertain is a social space more than it is a musical space, as is the other musical space featured in *Persuasion* as well: the concert hall. Late in the novel Anne attends a concert with her family and their cousin Lady Dalrymple's party, the description of which gives a clue to the cultural function that music performs in the concert space: "The whole party was collected, and all that remained was to marshal themselves, and proceed into the Concert Room; and be of all the consequence in their power, draw as many eyes, excite as many whispers, and disturb as many people as they could" (202). The ulterior motives of the would-be music aficionados are later illuminated once again, as the intermission for the concert is concluding: "The anxious interval wore away unproductively. The others returned, the room filled again, benches were reclaimed and repossessed, and another hour of pleasure or of penance was to be set out, another hour of music was to give delight or the gapes, as real or affected taste for it prevailed (203).

The fact that the people "fill" the room, not the sound, is a meaningful indicator here. The people are the focus: people who come to be seen, and to mingle within a social sphere of those who are assumed to have musical taste. The grandeur of the performance space (which is at one point alluded to, obliquely, as Anne is unable to focus on the "brilliancy of the room,") functions in almost complete accord with the people within—concern over facade and ceremony is what counts. Austen's own letters reveal her quiet dedication to music and piano practice, (and her discomfort with this kind of concert setting); unsurprisingly, *Persuasion* leaves no doubt as to how the reader is expected to judge the fawning, status-obsessed musical dilettantes at the concert.

This superficiality becomes even more apparent as Anne relives her experience the next day in conversation with Mrs. Smith, who was unable to attend due to prolonged illness. As a close friend, Mrs. Smith is privy to Anne's unguarded (well, less guarded) responses, and Anne reveals her ideas of social consumption of music, and her own take on musical spectators. This comes out in her response to Mrs. Smith, as the latter runs through her list of a mutual acquaintance to inquire after, to catch up on gossip: "Old Lady Mary Maclean? I need not ask after her. She never misses, I know; and you must have seen her. She must have been in your own circle; for as you went with Lady Dalrymple, you were in the seats of grandeur, round the orchestra, of course." Like the long list of other people on parade at the event, after whom her friend has already inquired, Anne confesses that she did not take note of this concert-goer's presence (though her meaningful encounter with Frederick Wentworth probably had as

much to do with her inattention as her focus on the music that was the pretense of the gathering, after all). Her reply encompasses her commentary on the social facade and her own against-the-grain enjoyment of the music: "No, that was what I dreaded. It would have been very unpleasant to me in every respect. But happily Lady Dalrymple always chooses to be farther off; and we were exceedingly well placed, that is, for hearing; I must not say for seeing, because I appear to have seen very little" (209). The custom of important personages taking "seats of grandeur" at the highly visible (if acoustically abysmal) area surrounding the orchestra, is clearly under critique here. Austen brings to light the vague hypocrisy, or at least affectation, of attending a musical event for anything but an artistic experience.

As much as *Persuasion* is a novel that allows us to see the cultural employment of music at this time, and musical spaces, it is also a novel about Anne's maintained separation from the hypocritical cultural norm. Anne respectfully maintains that she goes to a concert to listen, and earlier in the novel we learn that she frequently indulges in a hint of musical solipsism:

> She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation. Excepting one short period of her life, she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's fond partiality for their own daughters' performance, and total indifference to any other person's, gave her much more pleasure for their sakes, than mortification for her own. (83)

Anne's individual plight, as out of synch from society, for which music is merely one aspect, is what makes this a dramatic text. The way that music functions to connect

society has very little to do with its status as an artistic phenomenon--though we are meant to admire Anne all the more for her insistence on music as an art. In fact, the space that Anne creates for herself with music is, in some ways, a double space: that of the courtship arena of the dance floor for others, and a protective shell of uninterrupted peace and solitude for herself. This duality stands out particularly when Anne is playing for the Musgroves at the party that includes the newly returned Captain Wentworth: "The evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her services, as usual; and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved" (104). Music, for Anne in this instance (and, to a lesser extent, likely many gatherings at which she is overlooked) acts as a defense mechanism that allows her much needed peace and solitude amid the chaotic and painful situation she faces. Further illustration of this comes a few pages later:

> These were some of the thoughts which occupied Anne, while her fingers were mechanically at work, proceeding for half an hour together, equally without error, and without consciousness. . . . Once, too, he (Wentworth) spoke to her. She had left the instrument on the dancing being over, and he had sat down to try to make out an air which he wished to give the Miss Musgroves an idea of. Unintentionally she returned to that part of the room; he saw her, and instantly rising, said, with studied politeness --
> "I beg your pardon, madam, this is your seat"; and though she immediately drew back with a decided negative, he was not to be induced to sit down again. (105)

This passage is often cited as evidence that Anne (and, by extension, Austen herself) did not really care for music, and pursued it in a perfunctory way. It is also used as evidence that there is a wide gulf of understanding between Wentworth and Anne. I propose that it actually contradicts both of these findings. Anne's musicality is without dispute,

evidence of which can be found in her unique enjoyment of the concert later in the novel, and her tendency to "feel alone in the world" musically. But should it be surprising that a musician of Anne's apparent caliber should have another way for music to give back—this time in the form of a wall of isolation, about which she need not think in order to employ it? Would critics have her rather be deeply moved by the endless string of repetitive country dances she plays for the Musgroves? Of course she plays them mechanically—indeed, a steady, predictable, machine-like rhythm is what is required for dancing. She plays this way not because she does not really care for music, but because she appreciated the solitude and chance for thought that music can provide her in this case. Also, unlike her sisters, she is mindful of the needs of others, and takes pains to provide them with what they want. Juliette Wells considers this aspect of musical solitariness in her work on the subject, as well, as she writes in "Jane Austen, solitude, and the artistic woman."[11] Wentworth, undoubtedly the person referred to in the "Excepting one short period of her life" from the passage above, may not be seeking distance from her when he abandons the piano bench at her approach, but could be sympathetically allowing her space—space in which to avoid him, if that is what she wishes, and space in which to escape.

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[11] The influence on Austen's novels of the conduct literature's discourse on accomplishments, and of her own experience as a writer and musician, is rarely either straightforward or explicit . . . . As with so many themes and topics in her writing, too, what Austen does not say about her artistic women characters or represent them doing is often as revealing as what she does say and represent. For Anne Elliot, as for Marianne Dashwood and Jane Fairfax, the absence or loss of a creative outlet is as telling as its presence, especially when such deprivation coincides with--and, sometimes, is required by--the gratification of marriage. Austen's novels hint at but do not depict a kind of loneliness perhaps more profound than emotional isolation: that of the artistic woman who lacks access to a beloved pursuit.

Anne's use of music in these various ways employs music for purposes other than artistic expression, it is true. And, in a way, music here serves as a means to an end in courtship and romance, though not in the aspect of a marriageable woman playing music for display of accomplishment. The way that Anne is able to live within music, in a solitary and individual way, and the way that she manipulates and embraces the possibilities of hiding within music illustrate a way that playing the piano can be turned to the advantage of the female musician, instead of existing solely as a patriarchal means of displaying marital fitness.

Mary Bennet's employment of music takes a rather different tack. Instead of appearing as a sympathetic "window into the soul" of reserved Anne's inner life, Mary's music displays her obvious maneuvers to make a space for herself in a crowded, often competitive family. The "free, indirect" narration of the characters gives the reader a degree of liberty of thinking not as easily achieved in other frames, and a withholding of overt judgment, that allows a character like Mary to display herself to the utmost (or, from a different perspective, dig her own grave). The way that Mary's music comes across is pre-judged, though, more than that of her sisters. While Elizabeth's playing is pleasantly dismissed, Mary's music making is described early on not by its quality, or lack thereof, but by her motivation for playing: "Her (Elizabeth's) performance was pleasing, though by no means capital. After a song or two, and before she could reply to the entreaties of several that she would sing again, she was eagerly succeeded at the instrument by her sister Mary, who having, in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments, was

always impatient for display" (20). Mary, quite unlike Anne Elliot, plays to "display," or take possession of the room for a time. By playing what she wants (often against the wishes of those present) she is able to exert her control on a social situation in which women have precious little leverage, otherwise. The use of "eager" and "impatient" lend this display a decidedly unsettled and untoward air, though, giving a rather unambiguous opinion of the behavior, if not the music.

Later in this interlude, we learn more about Mary's musicianship from the narrator. The direct comparison between the sisters illustrates the "use" value of music and its degrees of success upon execution:

> Mary had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached. Elizabeth, easy and unaffected, had been listened to with much more pleasure, though not playing half so well; and Mary, at the end of a long concerto, was glad to purchase praise and gratitude by Scotch and Irish airs, at the request of her younger sisters, who, with some of the Lucases, and two or three officers, joined eagerly in dancing at one end of the room. (20-21)

The language of trade, with terms like "purchase praise," marks Mary as more of a merchant than an artist, and certainly operating on a different plane than Anne, who creates not an atmosphere of domination, but one of self-protection. Mary's didactic tone in interaction with literature and other "accomplishments" reveal that her misapplication of music is not her only fault of vanity. The way that it is described, though, almost makes it a more complete judgment against her than a first-person narrated perspective, or alternating epistolary perspective, would—while it is difficult to disagree with the one character whose view is the only one presented of a given

situation, the seeming indisputable judgment of an invisible, godlike voice is even more difficult to gainsay. The fact that the dancing takes place at "one end of the room," but the music does not dominate the entire space, also points to the lack of success Mary achieves with her musical power grab. Though Anne and Mary engage with music very differently, it is significant that they both end up in the same position: playing dance music for others, their exertions repaid with (often silent) gratitude from the group assembled.

The tendency for women of secure station to take for granted the power music can exert on the space it occupies and those within it is evident Lady Catherine DeBourgh. When she officiously counsels Elizabeth and Georgina Darcy (through her comments to her brother) to practice every day to achieve "excellence," she speaks of it as if it is a prize to be taken, and not a process of artistic pursuit. Likewise, she underestimates the power of music to exert its influence on a living space, (or she does not bother to think it through) as she offers the rooms of others for Elizabeth's practicing: "'She is very welcome, as I have often told her, to come to Rosings every day, and play on the pianoforte in Mrs. Jenkinson's room. She would be in nobody's way, you know, in that part of the house.' Mr. Darcy looked a little ashamed of his aunt's ill-breeding, and made no answer" (154). The awareness of the inappropriateness that Mr. Darcy clearly exhibits betrays Lady Catherine's callous lack of respect for her housekeeper and for Elizabeth, but also hints at a lack of understanding of the capacity of invasive discomfort that music is capable of creating, as a form of expression that saturates the space in which it occurs, and is almost impossible to "drown out" for

unwilling listeners.

The story of music in *Emma* is quite a different one still, though Jane Fairfax bears more resemblance to Anne Elliot in her employment of the accomplishment. Like Anne, Jane finds herself in an uncomfortable place, but her discomfort is both physical and social. In fact, Jane's surroundings are as close to hostile as one could imagine for someone of her station: she is ill, separated from what she has known as her family, with no protection from the family that she does have near her, and forced to watch the man that she is secretly engaged to pursue another woman (and lie about her position and plans for the future). This situation fairly begs for a way to create a world in which to disappear. Jane's musical presence is one of the few avenues in which she is Emma's superior, but that is not surprising, since Emma does not experience the kind of groundlessness that would make music appear as a viable cure. Jane's musical manipulation of space is affected by her surreptitious relationship with Frank Churchill, though, in that any attempt to create a solitary sphere of self-protection, like Anne Elliot, is thwarted by her fiancé (instead of facilitated, as Wentworth does for Anne). The first instance of this occurs at the evening gathering at the Cole's, at which Frank sings with Emma, a mere pretense for joining along with Jane as well:

> They sang together once more; and Emma would then resign her place to Miss Fairfax, whose performance, both vocal and instrumental, she never could attempt to conceal from herself, was infinitely superior to her own. With mixed feelings, she seated herself at a little distance from the numbers round the instrument, to listen. Frank Churchill sang again. They had sung together once or twice, it appeared, at Weymouth. But the sight of Mr. Knightley among the most attentive, soon drew away half Emma's mind; and she fell into a train of thinking on the subject of Mrs. Weston's suspicions, to which the sweet sounds of the united voices gave only momentary interruptions. (218)

Jane's superior musicality is acknowledged, indirectly by the narrator's illustration of Emma's thoughts (isn't it interesting that so many of the narrator's assertions are mistaken for Emma's in criticism of this novel? More than most, perhaps because the narrator presumes to share Emma's thoughts and state of mind so frequently.) The way that the space is created with music for Emma has more to do with her reaction to the way that others listen than her own experience of the sounds (which give her only "momentary interruptions"). But for Jane herself, when "Towards the end of Jane's second song, her voice grew thick" (219), the musical interlude may not give her solitude, but it does give her a brief respite from pretense, as she is allowed a brief time in which she can communicate with her beloved, and create a space in which they can be together and uninterrupted. When Mr. Knightley mistakes what is likely her emotional reaction to being carried away by this fleeting opportunity for connection with Churchill, the bubble pops, though.

The episode the following day, which finds Emma, Jane, and Frank collected again, this time at Mrs. Bates's house, to admire the new piano, shows the same musical interaction, though with more interruption, and thus less success. Indeed, it is Frank's own indiscretion that prohibits Jane from creating a musical cocoon for the two of them, unbeknownst to the others present, using the music that bears significance for the two of them. His indiscreet gift of the piano is similarly telling of his impetuousness and lack

of forethought, and it reveals more than that, some have said.[12] The gift, and Frank's conversation surrounding it, communicates even more:

> He went to the pianoforte, and begged Miss Fairfax, who was still sitting at it, to play something more. "If you are very kind," said he, "it will be one of the waltzes we danced last night;--let me live them over again. You did not enjoy them as I did; you appeared tired the whole time. I believe you were glad we danced no longer; but I would have given worlds-- all the worlds one ever has to give--for another half-hour." She played. "What felicity it is to hear a tune again which *has* made one happy!-- If I mistake not that was danced at Weymouth." She looked up at him for a moment, coloured deeply, and played something else. (229)

Churchill's over-eagerness, or forgetfulness of where he is (particularly with the dramatic wish to have danced more, and thus with Jane) spoils the musical atmosphere, yet the mood that had been established is unmistakable—it is so complete that Frank *does* forget himself, and in the company of Emma, who he is wary of as a "clever" observer already. And it is powerful enough that Jane "colours deeply" upon Frank's acknowledgement of the re-creation of their former happiness. Like his behavior in the previous musical encounter, Frank unthinkingly assumes that his intrusion into Jane's musical creation will be welcome, without consulting her. The passage goes on to give further illustration of this:

> He took some music from a chair near the pianoforte, and turning to Emma, said, "Here is something quite new to me. Do you know it?--Cramer.-- And here are a new set of Irish melodies. That, from such a quarter, one might expect. This was all sent with the instrument. . . . Emma wished he would be less

[12] "Thus we may see that each item of music that accompanied the Broadwood pianoforte was artfully selected to reflect the tastes of both donor and recipient, to offer what was new and fashionable as well as familiar and nostalgic, and to enhance the private enjoyment of two persons engaged in a secret dialogue in which music provided the link between memory and reality" (p 17 "Music, Character, and Social Standing in Jane Austen's *Emma"*, Libin).

> pointed, yet could not help being amused; and when on glancing her eye towards Jane Fairfax she caught the remains of a smile, when she saw that with all the deep blush of consciousness, there had been a smile of secret delight, she had less scruple in the amusement, and much less compunction with respect to her.--This amiable, upright, perfect Jane Fairfax was apparently cherishing very reprehensible feelings. He brought all the music to her, and they looked it over together. . . . "She is playing Robin Adair at this moment--his favourite." (229-230)

The likelihood that Robin Adair is in fact Churchill's favorite, and not Mr. Dixon's (who he alludes to here) has been discussed previously, and seems probable. While Frank misleads Emma into thinking that Jane is creating a solitary world for herself, to imagine herself in the company of Mr. Dixon, she is once again creating a connection between Frank and herself, in the only way that is possible, since they are always in company when they see each other. By isolating himself with Emma, instead of leaving himself open to mishap, as his previous interaction with Jane has, Churchill is able to maintain the pretense of encouraging Emma's suspicion, while actually indulging in the moment of being able to unabashedly watch (or scrutinize) and listen to Jane's communication with him, and the world of reminiscence she spins out musically. Emma's reported observations of "the deep blush of consciousness" and "smile of secret delight" indicate the thoroughness of this illusion. Her judgment of Jane, assessed as "cherishing very reprehensible feelings," is harsher than the reality, but also indicates Jane's disconnection from Emma, instead wrapped up in the musical plane of communication with Frank, and the memory of their previous indiscretion (which accounts for the repeated blushing—either that or un-avoidable shame in her current situation).

Jane's musical forays and attempts to create a musical shelter contrast dramatically with the other overtly musical character in the novel, Mrs Elton. Their interactions in this regard bear this out. While Jane shows taste, sensitivity, and enjoyment of music for its own sake (as well as for how it can be deployed as a protective shell), Mrs Elton is a classic case of posing as a musician and music aficionado as a façade of true taste and artistry. As Mrs. Elton officiously insists on helping Jane Fairfax into a governess job that she does not want, she illuminates the way that musical accomplishment cannot be escaped in this line of work, and can become more of a chore than a pleasure:

> I know you, I know you; you would take up with anything; but I shall be a little more nice, and I am sure the good Campbells will be quite on my side; with your superior talents, you have a right to move in the first circle. Your musical knowledge alone would entitle you to name your own terms, have as many rooms as you like, and mix in the family as much as you chose;--that is--I do not know-- if you knew the harp, you might do all that, I am very sure; but you sing as well as play;--yes, I really believe you might, even without the harp, stipulate for what you chose;--and you must and shall be delightfully, honourably and comfortably settled before the Campbells or I have any rest. (271)

On one hand, the abilities Jane possesses entitle her, according to this assessment, to "as many rooms as she likes (an interesting twist—here the ability to create musical space might parlay into actual space), but at the price of turning her music, and abilities, over to the service of others in exchange. Jane's comments on "the governess trade" that precede Mrs. Elton's speech indicate her unwillingness to submit to such an exchange, but can it be wholly avoided? Married women like Mrs. Elton, or *Sense and Sensibility's* Lady Middleton, are expected to let their musical abilities lapse upon marrying, when they are occupied with the pursuits of being lady of the house. An

important quality that they share, though, is that of marrying within their station, indeed, bringing sizeable dowries to the bargaining table. Mrs. Weston (nee Miss Taylor), on the other hand, has no such position; no matter how amiable her position with the Woodhouses may have been, as Emma's former governess, she has already turned over her musical knowledge to the common good (or the good of her employer), an exchange from which it is not easy to withdraw. Even after her fortuitous marriage to Mr. Weston, she is still expected to lend her musical services to the creation of social opportunities for others, in the form of playing music for others to dance. Like Anne Elliot, it falls to her to play the more tedious, repetitive dance numbers, but not the challenging, artistically gratifying concert pieces:

> Here ceased the concert part of the evening, for Miss Woodhouse and Miss Fairfax were the only young lady performers; but soon (within five minutes) the proposal of dancing-- originating nobody exactly knew where--was so effectually promoted by Mr. and Mrs. Cole, that everything was rapidly clearing away, to give proper space. Mrs. Weston, capital in her country-dances, was seated, and beginning an irresistible waltz; and Frank Churchill, coming up with most becoming gallantry to Emma, had secured her hand, and led her up to the top. (218)

Emma's dance with Frank Churchill is taken for granted as the way that things will proceed, just as Mrs. Weston's service at the piano is expected when the less artistically expressive and fulfilling performances have ended. While some critics take episodes like this, and the display of accomplishment at Mrs. Bates's house, as evidence of Mrs. Weston's deficiency as a governess and lack of true musical skill,[13] the more likely

[13] (From Piggott's *The Innocent Diversion*) The fuss about the arrival of Jane Fairfax's pianoforte involves most of Highbury society, and we learn that Mrs Weston, "kind-hearted and musical', was particularly interested in the circumstances and had much to ask and say 'as to tone, touch, and

answer is in her true enjoyment of music, even unappreciated music, and her submissive agreeability to be put to use in what others would no doubt take to be a less than rewarding musical task, even if she is "capital" at them. In fact, the very word "capital" implies a use value, or cultural capital if you will, that the dancers take for granted will be employed to their benefit. Like Austen herself, not to mention Anne Elliot, the playing of country dances for the enjoyment of others is a task left to the "kind-hearted, musical," but no longer marriageable, women of the day.[14] (Of course, in Mrs. Weston's case, this is due to her *being* married—newly married, not unlike Mrs. Elton, and thus due the same manner of attention at gatherings and dances—it is clear a different kind of pianist would take this kind of expectation as a slap in the face.) The repetition of her musical employment is discussed in a rather telling way, as preparations are made for the "proper" dance later in the novel:

> His first proposition and request, that the dance begun at Mr. Cole's should be finished there--that the same party should be collected, and the same musician engaged, met with the readiest acquiescence. Mr. Weston entered into the idea with thorough enjoyment, and Mrs. Weston most willingly undertook to play as long as they could wish to dance; and the interesting employment had followed, of reckoning up exactly who there would be, and portioning out the indispensable division of space to every couple. (232)

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pedal'. But in spite of her interest she had to sit quietly by and listen to the owner's (admittedly excellent) playing, for no one thought of suggesting that she might like to try the instrument herself. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Mrs Weston had any great reputation as a pianist in Highbury; which leads one to suspect that the lack of polish of her pupil's playing may not have been entirely Emma's own fault .(81)

[14] Austen mentions her plans to play country dances in a letter to Cassandra in 1808: "Yes, yes, we will have a pianoforte, as good a one as can be got for thirty guineas, and I will practise country dances, that we may have some amusement for our nephews and nieces, when we have the pleasure of their company" (243-244).

The playful reference to Mrs. Weston (and, to a lesser degree, Jane and Emma herself) as professional musicians, with "same musicians engaged," would not have been a compliment, for professional musicians, those who actually took money for services, were deemed to be of a lower social station. The situation of contemporary music historian and professional musician Charles Burney bears this out: though he has an extremely successful career as a performer and teacher of music, he spends much of his adult life crafting a public persona as a historian of music instead, largely to achieve social respectability for himself and his family. The further illustration of Mrs. Weston, who "most willingly undertook to play as long as they could wish to dance" reveals her good nature, but also the effort entailed, as well as the sacrifice—Mrs. Weston, as a newlywed, would probably appreciate a chance to dance with her husband and be entertained, instead of providing the amusement (and social lubricant) through her musical efforts. The fact that the arrangements for the dance are referred to as "interesting employment" shows the degree of work involved in the pursuit of the pleasure of others.

Emma is the only novel in which Austen explicitly identifies the music that is played; since Moore's *Irish Melodies* (along with the studies by Johann Cramer) is unique in this respect, and its reception history demonstrates a decided functional similarity to Austen's use of music, it bears consideration. The musical abilities of *Emma'*s Jane Fairfax bear more than a passing resemblance to the music that is part of the mysteriously given piano, Moore's *Irish Melodies*. Like Austen's groundless

heroines, the shifting situation of the disenfranchised Irish at the turn of the 19th century was tenuous and unpredictable. *Irish Melodies* re-create a sense of cultural space for Ireland at this crucial time when it becomes no longer a sovereign nation. The scale and gravity of the situation of Ireland after the uprising may seem quite removed from the dilemma of a Jane Fairfax; nevertheless, the fact remains that there is a meaningful correlation in the implied ability of music to not only console, but also be deployed (whether in a subversive or protective way) to re-create space with sound.

Like the musical women of Austen's novels, the *Irish Melodies* acts as a flag placed on the ground, both for Ireland itself, striving for freedom from English rule in rebellions such as the United Irishmen fight of 1798, and as a way of carrying the idea of national identity for Irish emigres later in the nineteenth century. A circular advertisement issued in Dec 1791 by Dr. James MacDonnell illuminates the nature of this identification of the Irish land with its music, one that would end up influencing Moore's project. It announces the intentions of a group of supporters seeking "to revive and perpetuate the ancient Music and Poetry in Ireland They are solicitous to preserve from oblivion the few fragments which have been permitted to remain, as instruments of the refined taste and genius of their ancestors. . . . And when it is considered how intimately the spirit and character of a people are connected with their national Poetry and Music, it is presumed that the Irish patriot and politician will not deem it an object unworthy of his patronage and protection." Indeed, this "intimate connection" becomes clearer with Moore's project.

The attachment between the harp and the music of Ireland allows the harp to

stake a claim on the part of the disenfranchised Irish people, which bears some similarity to the situation of women at the time. Both groups resort to music as a way to assert a deeper connection to the space in question than that which can be represented on paper. Moore's songs assert a pre-eminence on behalf of Irish culture that cannot be superseded or de-legitimized by "Saxon" interlopers, like this one, titled "Tho' the Last Glimpse of Erin with Sorrow I see:"

> I'll gaze on thy gold hair as graceful it wreathes,
> And hang o'er thy soft harp, as wildly it breathes;
> Nor dread that the cold-hearted Saxon will tear
> One chord from that harp, or one lock from that hair. (7)

The connection of the music to the land that it represents is made palpable through the body of the harpist, and is given physical form in the woman's hair, as it makes contact with the instrument, giving it not only a sense of renewed strength, but corporeal ability to breathe "wildly," and ultimately; it becomes an unassailable connection that the speaker vows to protect in the last line, even as he departs the land itself. In another song featured later in the volume, the speaker addresses the harp itself, seeking to speak through it to further the cause of Irish freedom:

> But come—if yet thy frame can borrow
> One breath of joy, oh, breathe for me,
> And show the world, in chains and sorrow,
> How sweet thy music still can be. (136)

As Mary Louise O'Donnell pronounces in her article "The Irish Harp and Its Utopian Space in the Eighteenth Century," the harp, and the way that it was portrayed in Moore's work, carried with it a nexus of meaning at this time in Irish culture:

> The Irish harp space, in particular in the eighteenth century, was an open space

> of opposition to perceived British misrule, but it also served as a space that could unite opposing forces within the country to rally against the colonizer. The utopian function, manifested in figures such as the harp icon or in harp metaphors, anticipated the potential in the Irish harp space to realize the better future envisioned by the Volunteer movement. (271)

O'Donnell's idea of this utopian function is fortified by Tom Moylan's work *Demand the Impossible,* which defines utopia as "images of desire" and "figures of hope" that contribute to the generation of "the open space of opposition" (253). The idea that Irish music, and the harp in particular, acts as a symbol for a utopian space, lends considerable power to the capabilities of the instrument. In fact, the pre-eminence of the harp is even recognized by twelfth century historian and royal clerk Gerald of Wales, who, according to O'Donnell, "identified the skill of Irish harpers and the musicality of the Irish people as being the sole redeeming characteristics of an otherwise barbaric race," and states that "his acknowledgment of the supremacy of the music of the harpers would prove to be a potent tool in the psychological fight against colonization during the course of the next seven centuries" (257). This acknowledged strength is anomalous in a group of people that are otherwise left powerless and disenfranchised. Like the musical women Austen depicts, Irish harpists (with Moore as a liaison of sorts) apply their musical ability as a tool wielded to assert Irish sovereignty and unity. And like the "accomplished" women of Austen's era, this talent for swaying things to their favor does not go unnoticed: "The music of the harpers and their esteemed status within Gaelic society were increasingly viewed by many English monarchs as a threat to the successful completion of colonization; consequently, from the fourteenth century onward, various decrees were issued to execute harpers and destroy their instruments"

(257). While women playing pianoforte in drawing rooms are not executed, and their instruments are not destroyed in an effort to silence them, there is a decided backlash against the power of music to influence and create a protective space for women, which we will look at more in the coming chapters.

Austen herself uses the harp in to display its unique capacity for the musical manipulation of space, though it is far less common than the pianoforte in her novels. While the Musgrove sisters in Persuasion, as well as Georgina Darcy are peripherally connected to the harp, the primary case study for harp playing has to be Mary Crawford from *Mansfield Park*.[15] The harp, unlike the piano, is an instrument of distinction, for the musical woman who wishes to put herself forward, risking overt self-display in order to gain distinction and employ the harp's reported powers to mesmerize listeners. Mary herself points out, when inquiring after the three eligible daughters of the Owens house who are "just grown up," that "two play on the pianoforte, and one on the harp; and all sing, or would sing if they were taught, or sing all the better for not being taught; or something like it." (266). If there are three daughters who are "out" in society, at least one must distinguish herself from the others by playing the harp. It is an instrument of obvious physical exhibition and display, making Mary stand in stark contrast to shrinking violet Fanny. Mary is also doubtless troubled by the thought of Edmund in the company of a family with three eligible daughters, and is imagining the worst of them. The harp, after all, is a sign of a rather forward type of musician at the time, and one unafraid of self-display. Along with the case of Mary herself, the musical

[15] The eldest Beaufort sister in the unfinished fragment *Sanditon* also plays the harp, but unfortunately for us, her relationship with the instrument is not developed in the existing pages.

half of the "Miss Beauforts" from *Sanditon* reinforce the idea of the harp-playing woman as something of a femme fatale. As Austen's narrator announces, the Miss Beauforts are "some of the first in every change of fashion—and the object of all, was to captivate some man of much better fortune than their own" (206). The eldest Miss Beaufort's musical stylings are set forth with the aim of earning "praise and celebrity from all who walked within the sound of her instrument" (206). This characterization makes it clear that Mary Crawford is not the only harpist that sets her strings to the purpose of ensnaring a husband. As Dubios says in *Music in the Georgian Novel* , Austen's depiction of musical women is not always in a positive light, unlike her predecessors like Fanny Burney: "The role of music is, however, more ambiguous in Jane Austen's fiction. The practice of music is presented both as a pleasurable activity and as one that elicits suspicion" (274). The harp playing husband-hunters would definitely fall in the category of "eliciting suspicion," as far as Austen's narrator is concerned. A set of engravings by Maria Cosway titled "The Progress of Female Dissipation" from 1803 shows the contemporary status of the harp from another less-than-flattering perspective—creating a visual impression so striking that even the harpist is seduced by her own reflection.

Though it is comparatively smaller than the boxy pianoforte of its day, it makes up for it with the visually compelling presence, often combining with natural surroundings to weave a spell, earning it the reputation of "keeper of memory," for its ability to make a lasting imprint on the mind of the listener. Mary, astute and calculating as ever, doesn't fail to pick up on the physically pervasive influence of the harp, and showcases it, and thus herself, for maximum effectiveness:

> Miss Crawford's attractions did not lessen. The harp arrived, and rather added to her beauty, wit, and good–humour; for she played with the greatest obligingness, with an expression and taste which were peculiarly becoming, and there was something clever to be said at the close of every air. . . . A young woman, pretty, lively, with a harp as elegant as herself, and both placed near a window, cut down to the ground, and opening on a little lawn, surrounded by shrubs in the rich foliage of summer, was enough to catch any man's heart. The season, the scene, the air, were all favourable to tenderness and sentiment. (61)

The connection to nature expands the sphere of Mary's influence, as well as making her (according to the narrator, at least) effectively irresistible. As Jeffrey Nigro notes, this scene bears a striking resemblance to the scene in *Waverly* that Walter Scott would have been writing at the same time.[16] Flora, however, uses the apparent mesmerizing quality of the harp to sway the hero to a deeper attachment to the land of Scotland, and the cause that she and her brother support, while Mary's more selfish aims are limited to expanding her own sphere of influence, and the ever-present goal of luring an eligible mate.

The harp works differently, perhaps even more effectively than the pianoforte, to claim space on the part of the musical woman. While there is a physical element to piano, with the display of the pianists arms and upper body, as well as the attention the musician commands, the bulk of the instrument also shields the player from view. The harp performs no such blocking function. Instead, it creates a visual spectacle, with its vertical disruption of space, commanding attention, but more disruptive for the way that the player must engage with it, as it rests on the woman's body (for harpists were almost exclusively women, outside of Ireland). This creates a necessity of becoming physically intimate with the instrument, and connects the musician even more thoroughly to the sound that results. Harp playing is not for the shy or demure, though, for where the pianist is able to create space in which to hide, as in the case of *Persuasion's* Anne Elliot, or Jane Fairfax in *Emma*, the harpist occupies a space in

[16] Flora also artfully positions herself in an outdoor setting, and uses it to amplify the power of her visual and sonic influence, playing "a lofty and uncommon Highland air, which had been a battle-song in former ages, . . . which harmonized well with the distant water-fall, and the soft sigh of the evening breeze in the rustling leaves of an apron which covered the fair harpress" (*Waverly*, 107).

which the visual is just as prominent as the sonic.[17] As a result, it can create a more powerful imprint, though this impression is often purchased at the expense of reputation: harpists of the time are judged for a lack of feminine reserve or modesty (see engraving above). As Deidre Lynch asserts in her notes for Mansfield Park Annotated, harpists like Glorvina in Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* and Flora in Walter Scott's *Waverly* were often portrayed as "figures of dangerous charm—sirens whose songs lure the heroes into imprudence. Commentators noticed that this instrument was one that showed off to advantage the body of its female performer and sometimes intimated that for many young women this had been reason enough to take up the harp" (97). Mary is not only bold enough to invite the visual attention that harp playing entails, she is skilled enough to use it to her full advantage, though she does occasionally overstep herself.

Mary carries her assertion of herself on the natural and domestic space around her even further than most, engaging in a sort of battle of wills with the surrounding farmland, when she asserts the necessity of transporting her harp, and attempts command a cart and horse that are needed for the harvest. She is ultimately unsuccessful in this effort, but is able to assert herself, using her harp as the instrument of her power (pardon the pun), to command the physical labor and costly inconvenience of her brother, who must use and his extravagant barouche to transport it instead. She blithely announces this to Edward, along with a sly jibe at the disobliging farmers,

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[17] As Dubois asserts in the aforementioned *Music in the Georgian Novel*, "The harp, an 'extension of the body itself,' thematizes, as it were, the feminine beauty of the performer; it becomes an analogy of woman herself, as I have already suggested with regard to Juliet in The Wanderer, and it legitimizes the male gaze upon her within a refined, polite social context. The harp appears as an enticing and alluring weapon of seduction, and Jane Austen therefore has misgivings about it" (288).

declaring: “I shall understand all your ways in time; but, coming down with the true London maxim, that everything is to be got with money, I was a little embarrassed at first by the sturdy independence of your country customs. However, I am to have my harp fetched to–morrow. Henry, who is good–nature itself, has offered to fetch it in his barouche. Will it not be honourably conveyed?” (55). This assertion not only makes physical demands on the men she would enlist to transport the instrument, it also claims prominence for the harp above that of the land and livelihood of the area (an assertion that would not be in line with Flora MacDonald’s uses and ideas of the harp!). The harp itself demands a great deal of inconvenience in the care it requires to transport and maintain, which effectively asserts a claim on the space that it occupies. As Richard Leppert emphasizes in his *The Sight of Sound*, speaking of the popular instruments of the day and the “extra-musical status garnered by their bulk,” the harp is not only “oddly shaped and hence difficult and expensive to pack and ship” but also “delicate, hence easily damaged, and highly sensitive to climatic change" (107). Mary’s lament that she does not understand the “sturdy independence” of the rural people (and their “custom” of placing more importance on bringing in the harvest) further highlights the delicacy and refinement of the harp in contrast.

Mary’s skilled use of the harp to assert her dominance of her surroundings is not limited to using the space around her to influence men she hopes to attract. She also uses her skills to ward off Fanny’s claim on her cousin, when she plays for her. In playing for Fanny for an inordinately long time, and even insisting that Fanny stay to hear more when the weather has cleared, she asserts the superiority of her claim on

Edmund's affections, which is amplified when she exhorts "I want to play something more to you—a very pretty piece—and your cousin Edmund's prime favourite. You must stay and hear your cousin's favourite" (191). The influence this has on Fanny when she bows to the pressure and listens to the piece is palpable:

> Fanny felt that she must; and though she had not waited for that sentence to be thinking of Edmund, such a memento made her particularly awake to his idea, and she fancied him sitting in that room again and again, perhaps in the very spot where she sat now, listening with constant delight to the favourite air, played, as it appeared to her, with superior tone and expression; and though pleased with it herself, and glad to like whatever was liked by him, she was more sincerely impatient to go away at the conclusion of it than she had been before" (191)

Here, instead of connecting to natural surroundings to claim space, Mary turns the powers of the harp to a more sinister aim. Fanny is so oppressed by the reminder of Edmund's attested enjoyment of the harp (he has already announced that it is his "favourite instrument") that the room becomes imbued with the shadow of his presence and imagined pleasure. The physical reminder, forcing her to imagine Edmund's experience of the space, "perhaps in the very spot" that she sits, makes a pronounced impression on Fanny, and effectively expresses to the hopelessness of her chances at turning Edmund's attentions from Mary's many attractions.

Mary is not above using her music as a space in which to hide and console herself, in spite of the seeming improbability of accomplishing this with the high-profile harp. Like Jane Fairfax in *Emma*, Mary too uses her music to create a space in which to isolate herself from further vexing conversation in moments of emotional tension, which she experiences in Volume II, as Edmund repeats his intentions to take orders

and become a clergyman, in the face of her stated disapproval. She generously ends up including Fanny in this bubble of safety, though it questionable whether this comfort is intentional: "Miss Crawford took her harp, she (Fanny) had nothing to do but to listen, and her tranquillity remained undisturbed the rest of the evening, . . . Miss Crawford was too much vexed by what had passed to be in a humour for any thing but music. With that, she soothed herself and amused her friend" (227). Like the scene above, in which Mary subtly needles Fanny by playing specific music for her even after she tries to escape, there is a frisson of out-of-the-ordinary intimacy implied here between Fanny and Mary, which is largely transferred through this musical communion. Mary adeptly employs the harp in such a multitude of ingenious and cunning ways, to expand her social and physical space in more ways than one. Given this show of power, it is probably no surprise that men of the day came to be wary of talented musical women, and grew to fear the influence that commanding women could exert over unwary listeners.

The capacity for music to exert a temporary power or control, by working on the space in which it sounds, is one that is implicitly assumed in these novels, though Austen ultimately treats it as a mostly benign phenomenon. Austen rests in a middle ground between her predecessors, like Fanny Burney, for whom musical accomplishment in young women is almost exclusively positive and a mark of sensitivity and genuine refinement, and writers from later in the nineteenth century, who grow steadily more suspicious of musical women, and the power that they have the potential to exert on unsuspecting male listeners. Mary Crawford is the only real

example from Austen's novels that foreshadows this paranoid phenomenon, and even Mary is treated with a reconciled acceptance, as if her habit of wielding music as a tool to ensnare a husband is more an unfortunate symptom of the situation in which women are placed by the limiting social order of the day, and not a warning to the establishment that feminine accomplishment as it stands is growing out of control. Instead, Austen's musical women are portrayed as mostly positive and commendable, able to employ music in a way that allows them to work within their less-than-privileged position in the social order and create a buffer zone, or safe space for themselves. Though this spatial assertion of self is occasionally deployed in a scheming or underhanded way, as in the case of Mary Crawford, it is more often a refuge for the socially disadvantaged. This sympathetic view of music functioning in a utilitarian, and rather extra-musical, fashion for the women who play it becomes less and less common later in the century. The Mary Crawford (and sometimes Mary Bennet) model of music employed to gain unfair control or status gains prominence, visible in examples from Lucilla's plot to exert social control through musical salons in *Miss Marjoribanks*, to the dangerously mesmerizing musical prowess of Lady Audley. As we will consider in the next chapter, the sense of guardedness and fear surrounding music spreads as the Victorian Era progresses, going from the "virtousophobia" and general fear of foreign musical interlopers of the late Eighteenth Century to a much more pernicious fear of musical women as a whole.

Chapter Three: The Woman Behind DuMaurier's Shell: Musical Women and a Different Anxiety of Influence

When reading *Trilby*, the ideas put forward about the titular character's unwitting musical channeling of her nefarious music master seem impossibly far-fetched to our modern eyes. The idea of anyone being overtaken from within, and used as a conduit for communicating another's thoughts, ideas, and emotions, could never happen, though some orchestra conductors might wish for it. But reading some of the firsthand accounts of the musical performances and experiences of one woman of this era explains some of this phenomenon. Clara Schumann often describes herself as being overtaken, put into a trance-like state of musical transference, to communicate the artistic spirit of various men, from her composer husband, to her music teacher father. Furthermore, her own acts of self-effacement, leaving her humbled to the point of self-erasure at points, are uncannily similar to Trilby's behavior, both on and off-stage. Clara Schumann offers an interesting case study, as a high profile musical figure who traveled extensively, therefore becoming part of musical culture in a variety of settings.

Schumann’s circulation in the world was always under the cover of important male figures, even after the death of her famous husband. While her extraordinary talent as a writer and interpreter of music is unmistakable now, as we look back at her life’s work, she never achieved, nor indeed sought, musical independence and recognition in her own right. Instead, she functioned as a (mostly) willing medium, communicating the musical vision of two important men in her life. The first man to communicate through her from behind the scenes was, of course, her father, who had intentions to use her as a

model for showcasing his superior musical educational methods. This type of musical coverture, with women's musical training always emphasizing the reproductive over the creative, creates the unrealistic, and potentially dangerous situation that plays out in novels such as *Trilby, Middlemarch*, and many others. And it really was a form of coverture. Legal precedent on this subject bears this out—there are a handful of cases in which women musicians (usually opera singers) are sued for going against their managers, the men" in charge" of women's music" --and the men almost unanimously came out ahead in these battles. It can probably go without saying that few if any male performers were sued in this manner during the same time.

While the idea of a woman as a vessel, being controlled without her knowledge is as discomfiting as it is implausible, part of the widespread assumption that women were vulnerable to outside influence comes from the belief that women are primarily emotive and centered in the body. This explains the perceived vulnerability of woman, as well as justifying paternalistic protection and diminished independence. Bringing music into this equation intensifies it further, because music is thought of as a medium that can quickly spread beyond one's control. In our contemporary age, it does seem like now we have lost sight of the idea of the body--the fact that music was something that resided in the body more than the mind made something like Trilby's possession and Clara's trances possible. But the conviction that women experienced music in a mindless, unreflecting way stirs less of a feeling of nostalgia. Rosamond Vincy in *Middlemarch* falls in line with this phenomenon, as well. Barthes's work on the relation of the body and the voice is closely attuned to this idea. His assertion that singing

results in an emptying of the singer (well, vessel) in order to create a connection with the audience, and what that, in turn, becomes, is particularly illuminating:

> Italian music, an object well defined historically, culturally, mythically (. . .) connotes a 'sensual' art, an art of the voice. An erotic substance, the Italian voice was produced *a contrario* (according to a strictly symbolic inversion) by singers without sex: this inversion is logical (. . .), as though, by selective hypertrophy, sexual density were obliged to abandon the rest of the body and lodge in the throat, thereby draining the organism of all that *connects* it. Thus, emitted by a castrated body, a wildly erotic frenzy is returned to that body. . . . it is the power of *lubrication; connection* is a specific characteristic of the voice; the model of the lubricated is the organic, the 'living,' in short, **seminal fluid**; singing has something coenesthetic about it, it is connected less to an 'impression' than to an internal, muscular, humoral sensuality. The voice is a diffusion, an insinuation, it passes over the entire surface of the body, the skin; and being a passage, an abolition of limitations, classes, names (. . .), it possesses a special hallucinatory power. (Barthes, *S/Z*, 109-110)

While the "seminal fluid" retains the impression of the body, it may be much more of a connection to the song itself. And, in the case of the female singer, the seminal fluid becomes the trace of the man who has (forgive the crudeness) musically poured it into her. Barthes goes on to discuss specifics of the singing woman, which bears this out:

> Young Marianina's (vocal) perfection resulted from her combining in one body partial qualities usually shared among several singers (No. 20). The same is true of La Zambinella in Sarrasine's eyes: the subject knows the female body only as a division and dissemination of partial objects: leg, breast, shoulder, neck, hands. Fragmented Woman is the object offered to Sarrasine's love. Divided, anatomized, she is merely a kind of dictionary of fetish objects. This sundered, dissected body (we are reminded of the boy's games at school) is reassembled by the artist (and this is the meaning of his vocation) into a whole body, the body of love descended from the heaven of art, in which fetishism is abolished and by which Sarrasine is cured. However, without the subject's realizing it as yet, and although the finally reassembled woman is actually there before him, near enough to touch, this redeeming body remains a fictive one, through the very praises Sarrasine address to it: its status is that of a *creation.* (112)

This is the fate of the musical woman at this time --to be considered a creation of the men involved in her art, be they music masters, parents, or composers. This seems to be such a commonplace that it is rarely remarked on as odd; instead, it is taken for granted. From *Daniel Deronda*'s Catherine Arrowpoint, an extension of her teacher/husband, to Mira in the same novel—though she rejects the training her father attempts to impose—the idea that a woman can be implanted with knowledge that is not really her own is discomfortingly unsurprising. In fact, when women break free of these controlling elements, and start to wield the power of music for themselves, that they are thought of as dangerous elements.

Eve Sedgwick's considerable work in looking at hidden connections in *Between Men* demonstrates that men's use of women as a "conduit connecting men" is nothing new, using Wycherly's "Country Wife" as an example, but posits that in the 19th century, with the advent of the Gothic novel, while women are still important, there is a turn toward a new kind of interaction directly engaging men together. She considers a variety of turn of the century novels, and determines that: "most saliently, each is about one or more males who is not only persecuted by, but considers himself under compulsion of, another male . . . the Gothic novel crystallized for English audiences the terms of a dialectic between male homosexuality and homophobia, in which homophobia appeared thematically in paranoid plots" (92). In reference to James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, she observes that "the novel's strong suggestion is that Gil-Martin in the shape of Robert is the author of much of the

carnage, or, psychologizing that, that Gil-Martin performs these acts as a projection of Robert's unconscious wishes" (105). Like Sedgewick, I am interested in exploring the change that occurs over the course of the Victorian era, and the shaping of gender roles defined against these fears. However, it seems that the examples I am considering still employ women as conduits, even requiring them to sanctify the connection between men. In fact, even the woman's body as a buffer is not enough protection, in some cases. These texts gesture to a critique of women's creative control, as well as warning of the dangers of self-deception when confronted with the manipulative utilization of musical influence.

The matter-of-fact acceptance of women as near-automatons is worth further consideration, as are the various side-effects accompanying this phenomenon. The performer's trance-like state exhibits her extreme susceptibility to indoctrination, as well as general belief in the plausibility of such an artistic imprinting process. It is not unlike the recent sci-fi TV series, *The Dollhouse*, in which people can be mentally emptied out and loaded with the minds of others, in order to fulfill various wishes. But where the Twenty-First Century version is shock and awe, used to scare us about the possible ends to which technological progress could be employed, the Nineteenth Century version of programming and implanting is not taken for granted as not only possible, but expected. In fact, it is almost naturally occurring. In DuMaurier's *Trilby*, the title character already seems to be loaded with two diverging, seemingly warring, incongruent personalities (allegedly due to her divided nationality, split between England and France), even before Svengali works his magic on her. The experiences of

Clara Schumann further reveal the assumptions surrounding musical training and performance for women (because none of this seems to hold true for men, strangely enough).[18]

Clara Wieck's formative years shed some light on how her artistic sense of self, as well as how others grew to perceive her as a musician, came to be. She was pre-ordained to be the mouthpiece for her father's teaching methods, to the extent that he named her Clara in expectation of her powers of musical display. From her infancy (records show that he waited through three male children for a daughter to be born, so that he could commence with his plan), Friedrich Wieck intended for her to be something of a transparent example of his genius as a music teacher, one that was unmistakable as an embodiment of his art, not her own. In fact, this reason is often cited in justification of Wieck's extreme resistance to Clara's marriage to Robert Schumann: it is Wieck the artist, not Wieck the father who does not want to let go of his life's work.[19] He allegedly chooses her name specifically to go with his intentions of creating an artist out of her: "Klara" translates to "clear, bright, bold, lucid, and unobscured" (*Beolingus* Online). The "unobscured" aspect of the word is particularly discomfiting, as it implies that she is almost a transparent medium, allowing audiences to see through

[18] For reference, I refer to Clara Schumann as Clara Wieck, Clara Schumann, and just her surname, Schumann, since she is the subject of my research. Her husband, when discussed, I refer to as Robert or Robert Schumann.

[19]For example, an editor's note in Robert Schumann's correspondence implies that we, as readers, should be sympathetic to Clara's father in his resistance to her marriage, since "The artist Wieck fought to retain possession of his own masterpiece. We must forgive the artist the faults of the man and the father."

her to her father's tutelage. Surprising though it may be that he did not choose to lavish the force of his attention on his sons, Clara was overwhelmingly the center of his time and focus during her formative years.[20] As a child, young Clara Wieck was said to communicate through music before she learned to speak, which was quite on the late side, developmentally. Anna Burton, in "Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck: A Creative Partnership," offers as insight into Clara's particularly musical thought processes, the intimation that "she wrote notes and understood rhythm before reading and writing" (*Music and Letters*, 215). Many speculate that young Clara Wieck withdrew from the verbal world not only as a reaction against control, but also a shrinking back from the disputes surrounding her parents' divorce. Either way, her innate understanding of music, and realization that the world of music offered a creative escape for her, was established at a very young age. But her father's training soon circumscribed her musical exploration, dictating how and what she played, as well as how much time she was to spend at the instrument. The etudes he composed in order to carefully sculpt the musical patterns her mind would follow started almost immediately upon her early exploration of the keyboard. As Reich notes, "Small pieces, written expressly for her, encouraged her to concentrate on position, musical phrasing, and a "singing" tone, and provided a familiarity with the keyboard which accounted for the facility and ease she kept to the end of her life. At age seven she was at the keyboard for three hours a day--one hour for lesson and two for practicing" (344). Wieck's single-minded attention to Clara's musical education, as a vehicle for his methods, makes her a

[20] Nancy Reich observes, as she interprets Wieck's documents in "Old Sources, New Readings" that "Her younger brothers had neither her aptitude not her malleable personality and were largely ignored" (Musical Quarterly, 343).

somewhat unique example of a musical woman, but the understanding that this kind of project is best imposed on female offspring, and his assumptions of Clara's transparency and lack of innate artistic integrity, is not. Nor is the assumption that, even as an adult, his daughter will not only require, but desire his controlling influence.

Furthermore, he required her to start a detailed journal as a young child, which, instead of being a record of personal thoughts, or an outlet for escape from his rigid plans for her, he used as an exercise in discipline and reinforcement. Perhaps the most disturbing entries in this book are the ones he writes for her, in first person, such as "My father, who long had hoped for change of disposition on my part, observed again today that I am just as lazy, careless, disorderly, stubborn, disobedient, etc. as ever" (76) (20 October, 1828). His influence (well, the power he exerted over her, influence implies choice) extended to her material possessions, as well as her management of her time and talents. As Clara's teacher and concert manager, Wieck believed he was entitled to the money she earned, which was legal in 1830. Women, whether wives or children--had no control over their funds, and restriction of women's roles in Germany was noted to be even more extreme than France and England at this time. Moreover, Clara was often reminded in the Diary and letters she copied into the journal that "the education of her siblings had been neglected so that her father could devote himself entirely to her education and career" (Reich, 347). Wieck considered his training to be an investment he was making in his daughter, making her more than just his representative. This investment entitled him to part of the girl, the idea of her autonomy would have been

ridiculous to him. It is almost as if he has given of himself, in order to educate her, believing that he is pouring himself into her.

Weick's early success at eradicating any questioning or resistance in his daughter seems virtually complete. Burton's article comments on the nature of the relationship between the two:

> Intrapsychically, her superego was becoming organized round the internalization of her father's precepts: thus she carried the responsibility for upholding her father's standards as a teacher, and when performances were below par she felt pangs of guilt. She also fully internalized Wieck's work attitudes--moderation, naturalness, and regularity of exercise--as well as the artistic ideals that he proclaimed--truthfulness to the spirit of the music, wholeness, good proportion, and placing art above material gain. (217)

The lesson is well absorbed, as she reveals in her very first entry in the marriage-diary: "Robert gave me a good blowing-up for doubling one passage in octaves and thus incorrectly adding a fifth part to a four part composition. He was right to reprimand me, and I was cross with myself for not having felt this . . . I must mend my ways" (76-77[21]). The question remains, who is the audience for this confession, as well as how can she be so sternly self-effacing without displaying traces of resentment? A later entry "by Clara," but in Robert's hand according to Eugenie Schumann, announces that "I have not the gift of composition," and Robert himself correctly analyzes her situation when he writes, during the third month of their marriage, that Clara enjoys his song but "must purchase (them) at the cost of silence and invisibility" (77). The early training is not lost, for Clara Schumann carries it on into her relationship with her husband, methodically punishing any intrusion from her inner artist.

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[21] As noted by Solie in *19th Century Music*

Wieck, in fact, was known to cite his own fear that she will be overtaken with sympathetic resonance with Robert Schumann's already emotional and chaotic art, as Robert's early biographer Karl Storck alleges: "He wrote music which offered little scope for technical display but entirely captivated genuine artists. Wieck knew his daughter far too well not to foresee her whole-hearted *enthusiasm* for Schumann's music. He fought for the artist, not the daughter" (150, *Letters of Robert Schumann*). Schumann thought himself exceptional as an emotive, not a technical artist, which corresponds to this fear that Wieck uses against him.[22] Clara Schumann started out life as the mouthpiece of a man, and carried out life as the mouthpiece of another that she chose for herself. In fact, she becomes the physical embodiment of Robert's music, when he loses his ability to play due to a controversial hand injury. Her efforts to communicate the essence of his music are only redoubled when he becomes estranged from her due to his mental illness (and the isolation treatment that is prescribed for it at the time) and at his tragic death at age 46. Like Mary Shelley, though both women are creative artists in their own right, they makes her primary business the cultivation of their husbands' artistic legacy, and Schumann herself continues to perform Robert's music as his greatest advocate for 35 more years after his death. It is to her credit that she is unquestionably successful in this effort, but the question remains: How can even Schumann herself assume that she is less an independent artist and person in her own right, and instead merely a living embodiment of her father's teaching methods,

[22] Schumann in a letter To Keferstein, Feb 19th 1840 'Do you know that I have written four hundred pages of music during the last two years: Most of it is published, too. When I consider that my music has nothing mechanical about it, but makes inconceivable demands on my heart, it seems only natural that the heart should need rest after such exertions. (Litzmann 6)

employed to communicate her husband's musical ideas? As such, she is imagined to be a mingling of these two men, artists who grew to hate each other, largely because of her, and their various claims on her, or, more accurately, claims on her abilities as extensions of them. One wonders what is most abhorrent to Wieck, the loss of his daughter, her significant income, her use as a mouthpiece--more than mouthpiece, more like physical embodiment of his methods--or the fact that she will use her abilities (which he really sees as his abilities) in the service of another man--is this a waste of her/his powers, is it that he worries her abilities will become corrupted, as she still teaches his methods to the end, so they don't, it would seem, or does he fear that his methods will become subsumed by Robert's unorthodox music, which he sees as basically all messy passion and no technique?

This illustration was displayed on Google for September 13th of 2012, in celebration of Clara Schumann's 193rd birthday.[23] It serves to emphasize the fact that this woman, arguably the most prominent of Victorian musical women, is almost never thought of as Clara Schuman composer, least of all by herself, or at least, not until recently. There is a lot of effort, in writing about her in the last half of the century, to stress her maternal side, much of it disingenuous—certainly she loved her children, but any reading of her journals or her children's writings reveals that musical performance, and being part of the world of the music, always came first. In many cases it had to, as her primary means for supporting her large family. This treatment, on the part of the press, insisting on showcasing the maternal, domestic side, was applied to the successful divas of the early 20th century as well, often with dubious results. The care that journalists (and her early biographers) took to stress her maternal focus may stem from the need to make her into a woman that was easier to take, for the general public--less threatening, more easily aligned and dismissed. Instead of being a composer, or even having a career that centers around her own musical skills and unique talent, she was glorified as being a mouthpiece--or hands, literally a bodily extension--of her famous husband. This carried on far beyond his death, but started with Robert himself. He referred to his fiancé as an extension of himself, as his hands (since his are rendered useless for making music, likely due to his own endeavor to stretch them into shape). In

[23] Note the prominence of her many children hanging on her. This is adorable, to be sure, but also rather unrepresentative, since, as Eugenie Schumann's biography of her mother reveals, the children lived with various relatives and schools, only living in the same household as their mother for a a short inverval during occasional summer breaks. Her serene, laizzes-faire, beatific attitude is also completely out of character, as well!

his private letters, his reference to her as the "source" of his music audaciously takes the direct nature of this proxy relationship for granted in a way that appears to be completely unwitting.[24]

Thus, the "danger" inherent here is not in Clara's potential power as a creative artist, but as an overly-compelling mouthpiece for the arts of others-- witnessed in reports of her being "unconsciously" or unknowingly overtaken and possessed by a powerful emotional artist, thus wasting the technical proficiency that she possesses, or rather, that she embodies as an extension of her father. What heightens this is the reported hypnotic state that Wieck experiences during performance, from this first-hand account of her solo tour in Berlin (the first one she undertakes without her father, notably). Wieck's account of her first concert on Jan 25th in Berlin:

> An hour before the beginning of the concert I lay at home in the most dreadful state and finally roused myself when I saw it was no use. With difficulty I threw on my concert clothes, but could not stand, my limbs were so weak that I could not lift up my hand. The doctor was caught in the street at 5:30, but he too could do nothing else to help me, so I was packed in the carriage and brought to the concert hall. In the middle of the concert I strengthened myself with champagne, but in spite of this everything went black before my eyes several times while I was playing, and in general I felt more faint than inspired the whole evening, and yet nobody noticed, everything went splendidly. (Ferris, 371)

[24]From "Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck: A Creative Partnership" (Burton, Music and Letters vol 69 no2, apr 1988) "In December 1837 RS made a heartfelt request in a letter to Josef Fischof, the Vienna correspondent for his journal, the Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik: "And now for another favour. Clara Wieck will probably be with you just now. You will see her, admire, and love her. Will you always send me word by post, as quickly as possible, whether she gains ground in Vienna as an exponent of the Romantic School--how she and her concerts succeed--and let me have your true and impartial opinion? . . . She is sure to play you some of my compositions, so you will hear them at their very source" (211, from letter of 4 December 1837, RS Briefe:neue folge, ed F Gustav Jansen, Leipzig, 1886

Her ability to play "splendidly" in this almost unconscious state reveals the strength of the foundation her father has instilled in her, and is eerily reminiscent of Trilby's trance-like performance. Of course, this instinctual musicianship is due to a lifetime of painstaking practice, enabling her to play without thinking about technique, which is very different from the situation in Trilby, as we will soon see. The "trance-like" playing comes up later, in the 1840's Berlin visit, as Schumann reports feeling dazed after performing too many Robert Schumann "Novelletten" in a row: "Despite the best of intentions I can only write absentmindedly today, or rather with real dullness and weariness, but certainly I am completely blameless, and today you must still show me a completely friendly face on top of everything since it is your fault that I have become merely dull; namely I played all of your Novelletten one after the other today for Dohrn and several musical Kenner, and also the Fughetta, etc. --no wonder I am dazed. But now give me a kiss, I have truly earned it" (379). The joking implication that Robert is to blame for Clara's exhaustion is, of course, not a literal report that he has been the one acting through her, but the implicit assumption that some fault lies with the composer, under whose order she was helplessly in the thrall. Note here the lack of agency that she ascribes to herself (or that her father asserts) in the descriptions of being "dazed" or blacking out during and after performance.

The idea of being taken outside of herself during performance is a recurring motive in CS's writing about her experiences, whether it is the enthusiasm of audience that "transported her" (Litzman, vol 2, 49), or her intuitive reaching toward RS when they are separated, and she plays his music, saying it is a "higher intelligence guiding

her whole being, tuned to music" (65). Her willing self-effacement makes this musical transformation possible, and, when she is separated from RS due to his institutionalization. Her diaries during this time show a willful endeavor to disappear inside RS's consciousness: "music the only thing that gives me comfort. I lose myself in it. I can no longer tell him how his works inspire me" (62). It is understandable, but troubling, to see such a habitual erasure of self in such a talented creative artist, but given that she is a woman musician at this time, it is not at all surprising. The model for women musicians is one that she struggles with, at times breaking past it, but more often re-enforcing it. Robert Schumann's death does not diminish this self-erasure, in fact, it intensifies it. Her reputation as an interpreter of his "inspiration" is only enhanced after his death. Take, for example, this review of a concert in England from late in her career:

> The last 'Monday popular concert' brought us back Madame Schumann, once the Clara Wieck of Robert Schumann's dreams, and still the most poetical of pianists. . . . Poor Robert Schumann! Your bereaved lady doubtless owes much to your genius and renown, but how much did you owe her? Woman is a great inspirer, and wondrous raiser of thoughts and creator of aspirations. Poor Robert Schumann! "Anne de Belleville," you said "was a poetess, but Clara was *poetry*" Yes! *Your* poetry, which has assumed so many shapes and forms whether in words or tones (for after all you were more of a poet than a critic) --forms under which we still trace the one idea." (*The Times*, February 28, 1888)

The start of this passage is already problematic, because Clara is defined by Robert even before their union, as "the Clara Wieck of Robert Schumann's dreams." The idea of Clara as musical modeling clay, open to Robert's shapes and forms, is reminiscent of the male musical "creator" in the Barthes passage from *S/Z*, as well. And finally, the

apparent transparency that is unquestioningly assumed by the audience seems a likely influence for DuMaurier's heroine.

An excerpt from Clara Schumann's 1839 diaries further reveals her self-defeating attitude toward composition, based almost entirely on gender assumptions, it would seem: “a woman must not desire to compose--not one has been able to do it, and why should I expect to? It would be arrogance, although indeed, my father led me into it in earlier days” (cited in Schonberg, 176). Her willingness to completely immerse herself in what she believed to be the composer's intent, most notable in her playing of her husband's music, made her famous beyond peer as an interpretive musician. But it came at the cost of her sense of herself, at times. Her diaries after Robert is institutionalized reveal a discomfiting unravelling of self: “music the only thing that gives me comfort. I lose myself in it. I can no longer tell him how his works inspire me” (Litzman, 62). Though this may well be an excellent coping mechanism, this wistful passage reminds us of Schumann’s general musical practice of immersing herself, and, as she says, losing herself in the music that she plays. The description of this gesture of willful artistic self-erasure is used in conjunction with her lament about being “inspired” by R. Schumann, but unable to tell him. If we go back to an earlier definition of inspire, as “to take in”, this becomes even more pronounced of a self-replacement, but with the increased anxiety and frustration of separation limiting the transfer. Clara’s musical trances. Was this commonplace? Was it part of her insistence on channeling the composer’s intent, to an extreme degree? The hypnotic suggestion of this would not be

surprising to contemporary audiences, though, so it appears as common, and, if anything, admirable.

One distinctive feature of Clara Schumann's performance ethic is the unshakeable belief that the composer's intent is law; she works tirelessly to stamp out any personal flourishes or instances in which her own impressions conflict. If she holds a secret differing opinion inside, it is a well-kept secret. Unlike the villainous female musicians in literature (Annabella in *Tenant of Wildfel Hall*, Lucy in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Blanche Ingram in *Jane Eyre*, Madame Merle in *Portrait of a Lady*, etc.) who use music to benefit themselves and hint at a critical disconnect between inner and outer emotional display, she works to eradicates her own creative impulse entirely when she is playing another composer's music. This plays in to the previously mentioned backlash against divas, and musicians who assert their own will in performance and interpretation. As the century progresses, fear and mistrust of those who would exert control over the emotions and sympathies of unsuspecting listeners grows, and Clara Schumann's musical development is influenced by this growing suspicion. At any rate, Schumann exerts considerable effort, if her journals are any indication, to make her own interior thoughts match this outside imposed intent, as well. It is not clear whether this stern insistence is related to the prevailing fear of the musical woman, feared because she brings men to their knees with her musical emotive displays, but they are not real—the inside is quite a different story than what is apparent on the outside. Contemporary sources earnestly suggest that she is somehow channeling someone beyond herself, and not exerting her own musical will in performance, and makes a conscious choice to give

up her own musical will to that of her dead husband.[25] The distinguishing of pianists at this time as either "performer's musicians" or composer's musicians", and the fact that men are far more likely to be the former, and women the latter, lends the assumption that women are "vessels" who channel the composer, instead of imprinting themselves on the music that they play, further support.[26] The fact that the virtuoso "diva" artists so blatantly violate this expectation of obedience is one of the features that makes them so threatening to the balance between musical and gendered power dynamic. Robert Schumann himself, in the years before his intimate relationship with Clara, espouses these ideas on women and musical creative power: "how amazing it is that there are no female composers, although we have had bad female poets and good female painters. Might one regard woman herself as the frozen, firm embodiment of music?'(*Jugendbriefe*, 295). Women, according to this assessment, are the "embodiment," or the vessel, but not conscious creators of musical art. Even Clara Schumann herself buys into these imposed limits on feminine musical agency, saying of fellow performer and composer Fanny Mendelssohn that she "musically admires her so much more as a pianist than a composer. Women always betray themselves in their compositions, and this is true of myself as well as of others" (*Clara Schumann Dedicated Spirit*, 101). One wonders what Schumann's response would be to the recent indications that Felix Mendelssohn's celebrated "Easter Sonata" was actually written by

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[25] Reflect back to this passage from her journal: "Robert gave me a good blowing-up for doubling one passage in octaves and thus incorrectly adding a fifth part to a four part composition. He was right to reprimand me, and I was cross with myself for not having felt this . . . I must mend my ways"(76-77).

[26] "I often spied little boats, hovering daringly over the water. There lacked only a master's hand at the helm, a smartly spread sail, to send them cutting swiftly, triumphantly and surely through the waves"

his sister Fanny.[27] Or the possibility that Bach's Cello Concertos may have been written by his wife[28]. Assertions like Schumann's, that women have limited abilities when it comes to artistic creation, were nevertheless commonly held, and largely supported by the fact that musical compositions by women were a rarity (due in part, it would seem, to women claiming the greater credibility of publishing under a man's name, and in part to the unavoidable reality that women were forced to bear the vast majority of the burden of childrearing and household management, leaving them little time for the luxury of pursuing their own work, coupled with the lack of opportunity for education in music theory and composition and resources like availability of instruments and materials, that would make their participation in the field of "creative" musical labor more possible). Nevertheless, the idea of betrayal here also calls to mind the unwanted revelation of the literary examples above; music reveals a multitude of sins. The gender assumption that men don't betray themselves assumes the practice of men hiding themselves in music. But by downplaying the creative power that women are capable of exerting through music, and instead attributing it to men functioning from behind the scenes, fears of the power women can wield with music may be diffused and disarmed. The cost of this illusion of safety, though, is the exposure of the implied connections that are then brought out between men, the audience and the man behind the performer. To go back to Sedgewick's revelations in *Between Men*, mentioned above, there is also a growing paranoia that male listeners may be involuntarily complicit in seeking such

[27] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/03/09/a-mendelssohn-masterpiece-was-really-his-sisters-after-188-years-it-premiered-under-her-name/?utm_term=.e63da06921dd
[28] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/10/28/documentary-some-of-bachs-great-masterpieces-were-composed-by-his-wife/?utm_term=.8c95b7fa46e7

contact, or as Sedgewick refers to it, these emotional bonds created by music may be, like Robert's unwitting connection to Gil-Martin in Hogg's *Confessions,* "a projection of Robert's unconscious wishes" (105). As we shall see in the consideration of *Trilby*, this connection "between men" cannot remain ignored or unacknowledged.

The categories into which musicians were separated, particularly pianists of this time, reflect this divide between interpreting the will of another and asserting one's own artistic drive. Thus, one was either an interpreter or virtuoso, and Clara Schumann endeavored stringently to be grouped with the former, often vocally criticizing the latter. This rejection of virtuosic display was focused on the abhorrence of reaching beyond the vision of the original composer, in a way that became increasingly restrictive. As Alan Walker illustrates in his biography of Robert, "Clara and Liszt, in fact, were at opposite ends of almost every artistic issue. Their conflicting attitude in interpretation tells it all. For Clara, the interpreter was the servant of the composer, there to carry out his every bidding, never to swerve from the printed page (even if she memorized everything). Liszt called this the 'Pilate offence' --a public washing of the hands of the music--and regarded it as a denial of the player's artistic personality" (410). An 1890 article in *Murray's Magazine* about Natalie Janotha's experience as Schumann's pupil, illuminates the seriousness with which Schumann takes this mission. At this point in Janotha's story, CS chastises her for an affectation that has creeped up in her playing, that of raising her arms in a showy manner, attempting to demonstrate that her playing is easy and effortless:

> A real artist never does that; it is only a habit of the dilettanti. They raise their eyes, shake their heads, and cast conceited glances round the hall, when the loftiness of their aim ought to compel them to rise above earthly things, and seek to five fitting expression to the great work of which they are the interpreters. *When an artist comes on the platform he does not belong to the public; his personality is merged in that of the master who speaks through him.* (67, Vol 7, January 1890)

The indignant reminder that an artist does not belong to the public is not surprising, but the insistence that "his personality is merged" with "the master who speaks through him" is extreme, and not a little alarming. The term "master" to describe the composer of music relays a disquietingly unequal balance of power between the performer and writer of music, which is made more pronounced by the idea of this master having the ability to control the performer, like a vehicle, "speaking through him." The further erasure Clara Schumann requires is not of not personal will, or artistic intent, but that the entire "personality" of the performer be supplanted by that of the "master" (for it is not merged with, but more accurately completely *sub*merged). Also note the distinction of the artist as "interpreter," bringing up the distinction between virtuoso and interpreter once again.

The question of interpretation vs virtuosity, for artists like Schumann, clearly privileges interpretation as a higher form of musical display, yet one that implies a lack of agency on the part of the musician. This ties into the ideas of unnatural powers attributed to music in this era. For example, take this 1888 *Musical Times* description of true, or "genuine" music, from Fr Niecks:

> Genuine music--which is something very different from the usual strumming, scraping, piping, and dittying--is a powerful means of culture. It is a language

> that expresses things which no other language can express, at least not with the same force and subtlety; a language that solves the problem of how one soul speaks to another soul. The power of speaking and understanding this language, however, is not so much an acquirement from without as a growth from within. Unfortunately, in most cases, so-called musical accomplishments do not deserve even the name of acquirements, being rather precarious loans than absolute purchases. (402)

At the risk of letting Niecks speak for all Victorians, this endorses the view that the stakes are high when it comes to music, and it is a phenomenon that is under heavy scrutiny. The pejorative terms for things that are not "true music" reveal this as well: "a pastime that pleasantly tickles our ears and agreeably exercises our lungs, fingers, hands, etc," or "an overwhelming majority waste time, money, energy, and their own and other people's patience lamentably" or, perhaps the most egregious, "no more than the art of harmonic proportions." Such a cold, detached aspect of music is chilling indeed, for music should, per this assessment, "affect the mind and the heart, and through them the whole moral and intellectual man." When regarded as this pervasive, powerful force, is it any wonder that music becomes an important and potentially dangerous communicator? The condescending characterization of ordinary music making as "strumming, scraping, piping, and dittying" indicates a low view of everyday musical "accomplishment." The intimacy of "a language that solves the problem of how one soul speaks to another soul" opens up a space for vulnerable exposure, both on the part of the musician as well as listener. It is important to note that the souls in question are singular--intimating that true musical communication is between two people, more than between player and audience. Does this imply drawing room music, women performing for men, or is it an indication that this closeness can be achieved between

one musician and each member of a large audience singly? One would expect that gender notions about music would be more progressive by the decadent, fast-and-loose fin-de-siècle period--particularly in a novel that focuses on bohemian artists in France. Yet, DuMaurier's *Trilby* exhibits some of the most marked anxiety about musical women and the dangers of musical power in any Victorian fiction. And while Clara Schumann provides a first-hand account of willing suspension of self-will in service of communicating the artistic vision of another, *Trilby*'s Svengali exploits this potential avenue of control in a much more insidious and exploitative manner, stirring already existing fear and paranoia about musical women and the agenda being executed through all the "sweet sounds" of the hyper-emotive, lush stylings of late Romantic music.

Where *Trilby* is concerned, the issue of musical women and who is controlling them becomes more drenched in fear and abject horror. The power associated with music, in its ability to influence emotion beneath the surface of conscious choice, is one that is heavily mistrusted at this time, heightened by the fact that Trilby's medium of musical communication is vocal music, as opposed to Schumann's piano performance. While pianists, from professional performers to "accomplished" amateurs, are somewhat suspected for their motives, the stakes are much higher for vocal music. Part of Schumann's distance from her audience, neutralizing her danger as a musical power, comes from the nature of piano music, in which the musical artist in question engages with the piano as her means of communication. The vocal artist does not have this objective distance; instead, she communes directly with the audience, or, if she has an instrument to speak of, it is her very body itself. Therefore Trilby, as a vocalist, is

already a more dangerous potential seductress, and Schumann, though she provides a model for the assumptions about musical women and susceptibility to outside control at the time, is much "safer." This heightened fear is coupled with a general fear of surrender, or finding oneself abject, under the thrall of music, and yet listeners (perhaps most pronouncedly men) seen to crave just this sensation. Perhaps there is a frisson of risk, of tempting fate (and a wee bit of masochism, since watching musical performance is often the only glimpse of a woman's inner life, or emotional depth that can be glimpsed in carefully regulated society).

As we have explored here already, England in the Victorian era gets a reputation for being a "land without music," a reputation that, according to Fuller Maitland's contemporary assessment of the phenomenon, is largely propagated by the English themselves. This is usually assumed to be grounded in a fear of foreign domination as threatening to the empire, explaining away mistrust of the larger-than-life, evocative performers like Liszt (no doubt the real-life inspiration behind the mesmerizing power of Svengali in *Trilby*.) But women performers, when they stay within the bounds of domestic "accomplishment," are generally innocuous, and part of a musical landscape that includes Clara Schumann and Jenny Lind, celebrated as delicate "reproductive" artist whose power is thus safely contained. The word "reproductive" as it is associated with musical women at this time is telling; not only does it highlight the "proper" role of women as producers of children, it degrades the creative and interpretive artistic work that pianists and musicians do in general. Women's musical performance is the most contentious and unsettling, becoming almost paradoxical as various attempts to

control and explain musical influences are brought forward. While the women who perform music are assumed to be irrational, petty creatures, able to relay musical thought but not initiate it, with words like "execute" and "render" used to describe female performance, instead of "create" "give" or "evoke," the revelation of the man behind the woman performing, and the inherent connection between men that is part of the bargain, are still somewhat shocking when revealed. At the heart of this is the reminder that Victorian men can't have it both ways--can't be pleasured musically by women who have been rendered supposedly safe, without acknowledging and confronting the man behind her in the music. This sparks fears of revelation of hidden predilection, unwanted intimacy, and, at the very least, susceptibility to unseen influences. The idea of the male composer behind the female performer is something of a given, though we have seen how all-consuming it became in the case of Robert and Clara Schumann. This displacement of agency plays out in literary depictions by confronting readers with a palpable male presence, whether in the role of teacher or implausibly hypnotic puppet-master, bringing to the fore the discomfort and paradoxical assumptions often swept under the drawing room rug. This reveals not only the unacknowledged connection between men, but also the dangers inherent in the overly restrictive roles that are thought to be beneficial and appropriate for women of the day.

To turn to novelistic examples, Rosamond Vincy's employment of music to woo Dr. Lydgate in Middlemarch gives a seemingly innocent example that ends up wreaking havoc in a broader way than just an interpersonal deception. A troubling aspect of this is the fact that Rosamond does not seem to be aware that she is "channeling" male power;

admittedly, her musical goal is to captivate Lydgate, but she shows no signs of deliberately invoking the ominous "hidden soul" of her teacher. Her subsequent mismanagement of music in her household are indicators of her general lack of awareness of her situation and the power that her actions, and their repercussions, can cause (financially or artistically). Of course, this relationship has all kinds of problems, but the musical aspect of it is one of the most interesting deceptions, because Rosamond does not even seem to deliberately invoke it. The questionable behavior here seems to lie with the social practice of education, forming young, newly wealthy girls into "accomplished" husband hunters with no practical skills:

> Rosamond played admirably. Her master at Mrs. Lemon's school . . .was one of those excellent musicians here and there to be found in our provinces, worthy to compare with many a noted Kapellmeister in a country which offers more plentiful condition of musical celebrity. Rosamond, with the executant's instinct, had seized his manner of playing, and gave forth his large rendering of noble music with the precision of an echo. It was almost startling, heard for the first time. A hidden soul seemed to be flowing forth from Rosamond's fingers; and so indeed it was, since souls live on in perpetual echoes, and to all fine expression there goes somewhere an originating activity, if it be only that of an interpreter. Lydgate was taken possession of, and began to believe in her as something exceptional. After all, he thought, one need not be surprised to find the rare conjunctions of nature under circumstances apparently unfavorable: come where they may, they always depend on conditions that are not obvious. (150-151, *Middlemarch*)

This description of Rosamond and Lydgate's courtship is the first discomfiting hint that Lydgate is not seeing things clearly, whether out of cluelessness or will-full self-deception. We can see that he has learned nothing from his earlier relationship with the murderous actress, whose innocence he persists in defending far beyond reason, which indicates a tendency to willed obliviousness. His attraction to musical escape and

catharsis in combination with intellectual stimulation make Rosamond's seemingly "noble" and "fine expression" almost hypnotically powerful. Lydgate does not simply enjoy the music, but he is "taken possession of, and began to believe in her as something exceptional." This episode is essentially the sole basis of his attraction to Rosamond, making him a victim of unconscious emotional manipulation, like a moth to a flame. But Rosamond is never encouraged to develop her own musical voice, instead she follows the path of "executing" another's musical wishes. The strength of the connection made through the music is uncomfortable, as it hints at a sort of deception Rosamond uses to "catch" the good doctor. This makes a further commentary on class aspiration as well, and the usefulness (or lack thereof) of preparing young women like Rosamond for courtship and attracting men, and nothing else. Rosamond's musical display quickly disappoints the good doctor, though, for after they are married, when she sings duets with his friend Will Ladislaw, he sees it as a dumb, animalistic display, galling him as merely "two people warbling at him" (554). This not only reveals his disengagement from Rosamond and her musical display, it also points to irritation, and likely jealousy, that Rosamond has a connection to Ladislaw through their music that he does not have access to—though he is likely more jealous of Rosamond than Will, at this point in the novel. Perhaps Lydgate is unwilling, or unable, to make the leap of acknowledged connection to another man through musical insinuation, preferring the behind-the-scenes man that can be willed away. (or perhaps he is unable to justify the ideal of music as pure communication of truth, with the reality of music as art, and more artifice than self-revelation.)

Du Maurier's work before *Trilby* works along the same vein, though in a less focused way. His earlier novel *Peter Ibbetson* feature lovers who penetrate each other's consciousnesses in sleep, implying consciousness as something that could be manipulated from the inside and out. This already raises questions of agency and awareness of psychological impressions. His illustrations in *Punch* also illuminate a high degree of doubt regarding women as artists (musical or otherwise)[29] *Trilby* considers this same model of interaction, but on a much more dramatic scale. There is a popular debate going on right now about women and the arts, specifically women comedians, which bears some relevance to this subject. The media debate (begun by the late Christopher Hitchens in a 2007 *Vanity Fair* article, and given a lot of space lately by *The Guardian*) centers around the idea that women are not funny, and is backed up by the dubious claim that men try to be funny, or try to be successful in any of the arts, comedy being included as an art for some reason, in order to attract the attention of women. And women don't need to attract men with art, they have beauty. There has been a strong, very vocal dispute about the terms on which this argument is based, as we would expect at this point in time. During the time that DuMaurier writes *Trilby*, it is likely that the idea of women's value being associated with their status as objects to display beauty would not have been as contested by men of the time. Still, one wonders if this kind of idea would have gained traction then. In fact, playing music seems to be a

[29] Some of these include: 1888, v 94 P 270, series "what shall we do with our girls" disparaging musical accomplishment; p244 opera, Miss McIntyre, female performer lampooned, needs strong musicians to lift her bouquet; and Feb 7th 1880 p 57 "Music at Home" Woman singing, screeching, spilling out of clothes, followed by a caption mocking the idea of woman as a "professional" vocalists (particularly "Signora Robinsognia")

tool that women use to seduce men, at least in novels (see *Lady Audley, Miss Marjoribanks*, Blanche from *Jane Eyre*, etc). But in *Trilby*, at least, the aim of the arts, whether it is the painting of the "three musketeers of the brush," or the musical displays of Svengali and Gecko, or even Svengali's employment of Trilby as a vessel for his own musical display, is not to facilitate men seducing women. Instead, the various arts are employed to allow men to seduce each other.

The novel starts with men who quickly bond, their friendship seemingly cemented over their collective obsession with a blissfully unaware, innocent female vessel: the happy, awkward, yet still somehow unselfconsciously beautiful laundress and nude model Trilby. The way that the group of male bohemian artists connect to each other through their adoration of Trilby, focusing on her "beautiful foot" as a fetish object that they are all drawn to, gives an example of unacknowledged version of apparently healthy male bonding—allowing them all to support each other's artistic aims, while never actually having a physical or emotional relationship with Trilby, thus keeping the connection "pure" and nonthreatening (and largely in their unconscious minds). This blatant objectification allows a connection to form that safe because it is unspoken and completely fabricated by the men in question, and knits them together in imagined communion. In these terms, the true tragedy of the book is the relationship that develops between Little Billee and Trilby, fracturing the more stable, healthy bond between the men. In fact, though, the connection between the men exists long before Trilby enters their lives, and extends beyond it. The unspoken assumption beneath *Trilby* is that the men experience a deep and lasting communion through their art, and

their appreciation of the "old masters" and, perhaps even more deeply, through the music that they appreciate together. The reason this assumption is unspoken is likely that there is a sense of taking as obvious this way of men's artistically interpenetrating each other's minds (at least, properly open, artistically sensitive men) outside of the text as well. In fact, when it is above board interaction between men, there is no social stigma surrounding it—it is simply healthy male bonding. This is evident in the intimate trip that the artists make to the museum at the opening of the novel, and in the way that Taffy and The Laird (Sandy) engage with the work of their colleague, Little Billee:

> They loved him for his affectionate disposition, his lively and caressing ways; and they admired him far more than he ever knew, for they recognised in him a quickness, a keenness, a delicacy of perception, in matters of form and colour, a mysterious facility and felicity of execution, a sense of all that was sweet and beautiful in nature, and a ready power of expressing it, that had not been vouchsafed to them in any such generous profusion, and which, as they ungrudgingly admitted to themselves and each other, amounted to true genius. (9)

The tactile, intimate terms in which this is expressed, combined with what are termed "his lively, caressing ways" evoke an unmistakable sense of physical closeness with each other. The comfort indicated here with the sense of mystery surrounding art and reveling in the perception of each other's art also reveals a comfort with (even preference for) the magical and unexplained that comes back to haunt them, as well.

When Svengali, the disturbingly powerful figure of alarming energy and "dirty foreignness" combined, enters the scene, the dynamic changes radically. Most significantly marked is the impression he makes on Little Billee, the most sensitive member of the trio:

> And sitting down on the music-stool, he ran up and down the scales with that easy power, that smooth even crispness of touch, which reveal the master. Then he fell to playing Chopin's impromptu in A flat, so beautifully that Little Billee's heart went nigh to bursting with suppressed emotion and delight. (13)

Little Billee, who is already feminized by the diminutive, gives in completely to the emotional swat of the music, with his heart "gone night to bursting with suppressed emotion and delight." The words "bursting" and "suppressed" are key here: maintaining proper manly demeanor clearly requires a suppression that Billee is unable (or unwilling?) to maintain. The "enthusiasm" mentioned is also indicative of a loss of self, as well—and is reminiscent of Clara Schumann's habit of giving in to being overtaken by such "enthusiasm." But while Schumann willingly submits herself to this state of ecstatic self-abandon, to communicate with her absent husband, Little Billee makes himself musically and emotionally vulnerable to a dangerous interloper. Following this display, Svengali and his violinist build on the foundation of overwhelmed sensibilities to deepen the musical seduction:

> Then Svengali and Gecko made music together, divinely. Little fragmentary things, sometimes consisting of but a few bars, but these bars of such beauty and meaning! Scraps, snatches, short melodies, meant to fetch, to charm immediately, or to melt or sadden or madden just for a moment, and that knew just when to leave off---czardas, gypsy dances, Hungarian love-plaints, things little known out of eastern Europe in the fifties of this century, till the Laird and Taffy were almost as wild in their enthusiasm as Little Billee--a silent enthusiasm too deep for speech. And when these two great artists left off to smoke, the three Britishers were too much moved even for that, and there was a stillness. (13-14)

The overtly sensual emotional manipulation on the part of the performers seems to hit its mark, with the listeners too overwhelmed for even a cigarette to commemorate the erotic encounter. The idea that Svengali (and his protégé) deliberately use their art to

work on their listeners is described in a way that suggests a taking advantage, with "knowing just when to leave off" and the "melodies meant to fetch, to charm" etcetera. It is also noteworthy to observe that all of the Englishmen listening, who are unaccustomed to such skill and exotic musical fare, experience a kind of rapture at the music at hand, even when the music in question issues from the unappealing source of Svengali's hand. Again, the interaction needs no feminine conduit, but it can only go so far.

The evening progresses to a singing display from the Englishmen, which Svengali cannot reciprocate, due to his apparent lack of proper apparatus for singing. Instead, he describes his voice student, Honorine, and whips out a small flute, called a "flexible flagolet," (could this be more phallic?) on which he re-creates the effects he is able to inspire in his female student:

> It would be impossible to render in any words the deftness, the distinction, the grace, power, pathos, and passion with which this truly phenomenal artist executed the poor old twopenny tune on his elastic penny whistle--for it was little more--such thrilling, vibrating, piercing tenderness, now loud and full, a shrill scream of anguish, now soft as a whisper, a mere melodic breath, more human almost than the human voice itself, a perfection unattainable even by Gecko, a master, on an instrument which is the acknowledged king of all! (28)

DuMaurier almost outdoes himself with superlatives here, this certainly seems to be a musical culmination of all of the evening's events. Once again, the visceral, physical way that music acts on the listeners demonstrates the connection that Svengali is able to forcibly make with his audience, almost a physical penetration. And, for Little Billee, his reaction is a graphically described outpouring:

> The tear, which had been so close to the brink of Little Billee's eye while Gecko was playing, now rose and trembled under his eyelid and spilled itself down his nose; and he had to dissemble and surreptitiously mop it up with his little finger . . . . He had never heard such music as this, never dreamed such music was possible. --a vague cosmic vision that faded when the music was over, but left an unfading reminiscence of its having been, and a passionate desire to express the like some day through the plastic medium of his own beautiful art. (30)

Though Svengali's musical manipulation is often described in uncomfortably invasive terms, the results are positive and desirable, seen here as inspiring and encouraging Little Billee (in the form of "passionate desire," no less) to reciprocate through his own medium of artistic communication. The terminology of his outpouring of response as "spilling itself" needs no further comment, though the lasting impression in the form of a reminiscence gives this method of communing between artists a marked preference, as having the desirable result of sublimating into acts of further creation. As Denisoff identifies,

> Little Billee first great work is a drawing of Trilby left foot, while the musician uses hypnotism to make music through the tone-deaf heroines perfectly formed mouth. The woman is objectified, literally, from head to toe. In the novel' s most powerful manifestation of artistic misogyny, Trilby disengendered voice functions for Little Billee and Svengali as a transit point for erotic interaction couched in a discourse of artistic appreciation. Trilby beauty emphasizes a polymorphous realm of desire that Little Billie finds both attractive and repulsive, rewarding and debilitating. (90)

He also points out that Trilby, both vocally and physically, is gender ambiguous or coded male, and Little Billie is somewhat feminized and susceptible. Without the gross anti-Semitism that is used to pit Svengali's art against the privileged Englishmen, this impromptu soiree seems to be an almost ideal instance of communing through art. And,

indeed, it ends in a rather orgiastic swordfight involving all of the men present, as well--suggested by Svengali, of course. This seduction goes as far as it can on a symbolic level, and, up to this point, still functions in a seemingly healthful manner for the creative impulses of everyone involved. But, for Svengali, this does not go far enough, as we see in the ensuing pages.

The story takes a decided turn for the worse in the second half of the novel. The fact that the Englishmen are so vulnerable to Svengali's charms, as it were, serves as a warning sign of just how great the danger of this kind of power can be. As the group disperses, and Trilby becomes overtaken by Svengali, the warning about the dangers of leaving oneself open to the seemingly pleasurable surrender of musical enchantment comes to fruition. And while Clara Schumann's supposed surrender to the influence of her husband's musical intentions is treated as a positive experience; both for her, as a chance to commune with her lost love, and the audience, able to resurrect the musical genius behind the "reproductive" pianist; the same phenomenon is anything but beneficial and salubrious in Trilby's case. Not only does Svengali, the ominous foreign interloper, get to "have his way" with the unsuspecting audience through the medium of his victim, he does so at the expense and suffering of his human instrument. Trilby is visibly weakened by the ordeal of channeling Svengali, and it eventually kills her (though just how or why is kept very mysterious). The idea that women can be overtaken and exploited by enterprising men grows out of the myth that women are merely "reproductive" artists, and is intensified by experiences and reports of artists like Clara Schumann. There is a deepening of the suspicion and mistrust of music's power

in the intervening years, coupled with the fear of agitation for changes in gender roles as the "new woman" phenomenon takes hold, making this outlandish tale somehow plausible.

The implications that this collective mistrust holds for women in general is startling, though, because the question becomes: is Trilby uniquely susceptible to being overtaken by a con-artist (in the true sense) like Svengali, or is this a common state for women in general? To judge by Du Maurier's *Punch* illustrations of female singers, the answer seems to be the latter, but we are given no basis for comparison in the novel. Mary Burgan addresses this question in her article "Heroines at the Piano," in consideration of Dickens and other mid-century musical models: "The fictional treatment of women and the demonic in music suggests the fear that too powerful an inspiration can overwhelm impressionable female hearers, often in pathological ways" (66). Another example of a woman "overwhelmed" by music, Car'line in Hardy's "Fiddler of the Reels," bears out this assertion. Though Car'line attempts to make the "safe" choice in marrying her mechanic boyfriend, she cannot escape her fascination with music, and in the end, finds herself an unwilling prisoner to the influence of the fiddler's music, dancing herself insensible, and losing her child as a result: "The notes of that old violin... thrilled the London wife, these having still all the witchery that she had so well known of yore, and under which she had used to lose her power of independent will" (168). While this sort of musical possession of women is, by the time that Hardy and DuMaurier are writing, taken for granted, it is the way that the men in Trilby can be manipulated *through her* that is the novel's more pressing concern.

THE "ROSEMONDE" OF SCHUBERT.

The ensuing action places Trilby as a stand-in for an assumed weakness or susceptibility inherent in women, or so it would seem. One thing that is certain is that Trilby appears in illustrations as a physically striking, but unthinking and unaware object. Take, for example, the these accompanying illustrations by DuMaurier, entitled "The 'Rosemonde' of Schubert" and "Twin Grey Stars." In both of these images, Trilby appears gazing off into the distance, seemingly at nothing (or if her gaze falls on something, it is assumed that it could not be less interesting to the reader). The vacant expression in both images might lead one to suppose that these are illustrations of the hypnotized singing Trilby, but in fact they occur early in the novel, before she falls under Svengali's thrall. Indeed, the description of her eyes as "twin grey stars" in the title of the illustration further objectifies the her, and implies an intellect and consciousness that is at once both unfathomable (like the stars) and vacant (like space). As an artistic creation, she appears to be the epitome of the empty vessel. Other

descriptions enhance this inhuman quality, comparing her to an animal.[30] A recent work of criticism on this novel dwells on this odd fixation on Trilby, in combination with an assessment of Svengali's character. Entitled “Jew as Homme/ Femme-Fatale” by Neil R. Davison, finds that “both 'the feminized Jew' and 'the female grotesque' can be defined through the threat the male-gaze locates in that which represents formlessness and corruption-an undefinable alterity that suggests a dissolution of a centered, linear, hyper-masculinized identity in the subject viewer” (78). Furthermore, the idea of Tribly as a vessel for masculine communication is considered in Mary Titus's article “Cather’s Creative Women and DuMaurier’s Cozy Men.” She states that “Like other mythic women in the late Victorian imagination, Trilby is simultaneously an empty vessel to be filled with the genius of male imagination and a powerful, endlessly mutable medium for the expression of some spiritual or creative power” (30). This portrayal makes her a greatly exaggerated echo of the musical women of earlier in the century, like Clara Schumann, who only receive acknowledgement and musical reputation through their association with powerful male artists, and not from their individual intellectual accomplishments.

Contributing to this objectification, and the suppression of Trilby’s potential rational consciousness, is the fetishizing of her body parts, in particular her foot. Little Billee and his compatriots establish a state of unconscious communion with each other through Trilby’s body before she becomes Svengali's tool for seduction, in fact. Their universal admiration of her perfectly formed foot is only the tip of the iceberg. In fact,

[30] Little Billee, for example, muses to himself that he “finds her gray eyes fixed on him with an all-enfolding gaze, so piercingly, penetratingly, unutterably sweet and kind and such as her ‘tender, such a brooding, dovelike look of soft and warm solicitude’” (97).

this connection, like most of those in this novel, is facilitated and cemented through the process of turning it into art, though, in this case, it is Little Billee who crafts the bond, one that extends far beyond the English trio: "The shape of those lovely slender feet (that were neither large nor small), facsimiled in dusty pale plaster of Paris, survives on the shelves and walls of many a studio throughout the world, and many a sculptor yet unborn has yet to marvel at their strange perfection, in studious despair"(6). There is a concerted effort to keep this communion on an intellectual (or spiritual) level, without any actual entanglement with the woman personally. They admire her as a symbol of awkward perfection, as well as a reminder of home, as well as a way that the three of them can solidify their bond. Her company has an effect on the three of them that cannot be fully revealed, like this re-created dinner memory: "on these occasions her tremulous happiness was so immense that it would be quite pathetic to see--almost painful; and their three British hearts were touched by thoughts of all the loneliness and homelessness, the expatriation, the *half-conscious* loss of caste, that all this eager childish clinging revealed. And that is why (no doubt) that with all this familiar intimacy there was never any hint of gallantry or flirtation in any shape or form whatever" (90). The studious avoidance of flirtation "in any shape or form" gestures to a shying away from a physical relationship with a woman, particularly this woman who already serves a more essential function. But paradise is destabilized when Little Billee forms a deeper attachment to Trilby, and shatters the equilibrium of the artistic community of three. The connection remains, though, lingering for Svengali to corrupt

and make impure as it fully realizes and reveals the intimacy that the three painters kept unspoken, thereby keeping themselves in a state of "half-consciousness."

The connection between Clara Schumann and DuMaurier's hapless shell of a heroine is, on one level, a serious insult to Clara Schumann's legacy. Though she fought against it in various ways, she was an ingenious creative artist, and gave her own unique interpretive life to the music she played, which is what made her celebrated and beloved, not some "channeling" of past masters. But her prominence at the pinnacle of respected performers, paired with the lingering assumption that she did not act independently, and was instead an exceptionally attuned extension of her husband (and father), which she encouraged during her life, had a deep impact on the way that musical women were perceived during and after her long career. The fact is that Du Maurier's *Trilby* focuses on the insidious power of the man behind the musical woman to a much more dramatic degree, though, and in doing so resonates with other musical commonplaces of the day. Burgan summarizes this phenomenon in "Heroines at the Piano," concluding that "Such sensational manipulators of music as an instrument for sexual domination illustrate an awakened recognition of its significance outside the drawing room. The increasing attribution of demonic musical power to Svengali-like figures perhaps involved a growing awareness that women's music might embody genuine power. The question of who was to wield that power became paramount in assessing the ability of women to take charge of their own lives" (69). And as we have seen above, the latent fear of musical women, even in the seemingly innocent realm of drawing-room display, could actually be a fear of being seduced by the channeled the

male composer or teacher—the question is whether the listening man is opening himself up to the man behind the woman, or leaving himself exposed to manipulation from the woman who deliberately exploits this channel for the purposes of "snaring" a victim/husband. Taken further, one could even speculate that the whole "land without music" isolation is based in a cross between homophobia and xenophobia. Portraits of European music masters and musical artists, like in Klesmer in Daniel Deronda and newspaper accounts of the reception of Liszt demonstrate fear of the power that an alien, powerful, seductive figure can have over the comparably innocent Englishman—we need look no further than DuMaurier's portrait of the English in *Trilby* to see this enacted[31]. This may actually act as a sort of bridge between the phenomenon of the Castrati as deceptively feminine man in the century before, and the 20th century fear of being duped by a "drag queen." In the instance of *Trilby*, this applies especially to the character of Little Billee, who is already described as dangerously feminine (and thus susceptible to emotional influence) and Trilby as conduit--with her already mannish, "masculine" beauty, when she channels Svengali's musical power, she becomes a sort of proto-drag queen (or at least a suggestion of this, as an overly masculine woman exerting a man's power through seemingly feminine arts.) What leaves Trilby disarmed is her innocence, in spite of her masculinity and dodgy upbringing. It is this very hyper-protected innocence, which is not only expected, but demanded of women of the day,

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[31] Little Billee, upon hearing Chopin, is noted to react so strongly because he is susceptible as an Englishman: "He had never heard any music of Chopin's before, nothing but British provincial home-made music--melodies with variations, 'Annie Laurie,' 'The Last Rose of Summer,' 'The Blue Bells of Scotland'; innocent little motherly and sisterly tinklings, invented to set the company at their ease on festive evenings, and make all-round conversation possible for shy people, who fear the unaccompanied sound of their own voices, and whose genial chatter always leaves off directly the music ceases" (13).

that creates the vulnerability that raises so many concerns later in the century. But we cannot say that we have transcended these fears in our own enlightened age. There is a lingering fear that men can be "fooled" by women who are not what they seem, or who communicate an unseen message without intending to do so. The fact that this kind of fear of unknown masculine musical control beneath a feminine exterior still exists today points to our lingering self-deception and fear of abnormal gender roles that have continued to prevail.

Chapter Four: Dames and Hidden Avatars, or Weren't There Divas in Gilbert and Sullivan?

The focus of this work so far has been on early to mid-Victorian representations of gender in music, which makes this chapter on Gilbert and Sullivan something of a surprise at the end. Why Gilbert and Sullivan? Well, their works (and, by and large, I am looking at Gilbert's contributions, though they cannot and should not exist in a vacuum, and the librettos are always already informed by their musical complements, in any consideration) combines genres, borrowing from burlesque, extravaganza, pantomime, satire, comedy of manners, Offenbachesque comic opera, and farce so successfully. Their focus often falls on government inefficiency, the general stupidity of socially mandated behavior, and all brands of arrogance and hypocrisy, but the probing of gendered behavior and expectations is often a by-product. They write social commentary sometimes with the courage and almost always with apparent irrepressible joy, delighting in exposing affectation, cant, and the pitfalls involved in unquestioning obedience, in a way that skillfully and humorously avoids giving offense. Or perhaps it is not that their humor is so gentle, but that it avoids being personally incisive? There is significant debate over whether it is effective social critique to spoof the customs and affectations that his contemporaries took for granted, or if it normalizes it, by revealing it in a way that does not condemn it outright (not that these are the only options). As Chesterton puts it, "It is always possible to appeal to the audience with success, if we appeal to something which they know already; or feel as if they know already. But if we have to get them to listen to a criticism, however light, which they have really never

thought of before, they must have a certain atmosphere of repose and ritual in which to reflect on it. How many of Gilbert's best points were in a sense rather abstruse points. They asked the listener to think about phrases which he had always used without thinking: they pointed out something illogical in something that had always been thought quite sensible" (200). Indeed, cajoling the audience into seeing beneath the surface of law and custom is exactly what Gilbert and Sullivan excel at, and they do it in a way that is often not even discernible to the audience itself, until further contemplation.

Gilbert and Sullivan are important in this conversation also because of their stubborn insistence on pointing out the truth beneath the façade of public life—Gilbert is often assumed to be conservative, but unlike Edmund Burke, he is gleeful in his resolve to expose what is beneath the veils of politics and politeness. Furthermore, his hawk-like eye for hypocrisy and ineffective, unenforceable, or downright absurd laws and unspoken rules governing Victorian society makes him worth further investigation, in this inquiry. The targets of his satire are any and all things that are blindly accepted, or taken for granted—things that "should be left well enough alone" are his perverse pleasure in examining, with a sort of schoolboy-like combination of charm and cruelty—for example many of the "Bab Ballads." This cruelty is also pertinent to the rather bad reputation that Gilbert garnered for his assumed grudge toward women. As Isaac Goldberg says in *W S Gilbert's Topsy Turvydom*, "No doubt it is to feed fat an ancient grudge; in any case, often, as I have sat before one of the Savoy operettas, with their recurrent types of the all-too fleshly, all-too unmarried, predacious female, I have

thought that I could see a malicious reference to the Queen. It is more certain that Gilbert everywhere populates his scene; not only as a Jack Point, in "Yeoman of the Guard," with his autobiographical whimsy; or a King Gama, in Princess Ida," with his eyewinking confession of surliness, but under the wing of a Lord Chancellor, behind the uniform of a Private, before the hump of a Dick Deadeye" (*W.S Gilbert, A Century in Criticism*, ed Jones 140). But, in forcing his audience to admit the humanity and potential of women, even women "of a certain age," Gilbert becomes (however unintentionally) a rather effective advocate for women.

There is a plethora of well-argued modern critiques of Gilbert and Sullivan, many of which focus on gender specifically. For instance, Carolyn Williams's *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, and Parody* makes some striking arguments regarding Gilbert's out-of-the-ordinary treatment of women and gender norms, though this critique often feels artificially yoked to her focus on Gilbert's genre experimentation. Furthermore, her gender focused assessment of the operas is rather invested in making Gilbert's "dame" characters a parody of the burlesque dame figures of the Victorian era. I find that I am more in line with Gilbert's biographer and critic, Jane Steadman, in thinking that his dames are a development on the theme that actually fleshes out the traditional stereotype drag roles, making them more fully human than traditional dames, in fact, than other characters in the operas, usually. Gayden Wren's exhaustive "Most Ingenious Paradox" is enormously helpful in situating the operas in their context, and shedding new light on the humorous and insightful commentary that they make on the time in which they appear. I have consulted it liberally here (perhaps too liberally), and

can find little fault with it, with the rare exception of an occasional tendency toward stuffiness. He is excellent at pinpointing the often camp style humor of G and S, with their insistence on characters' lack of self-awareness (though maybe the fact that certain women, like Jane and Katisha, are all too self-aware, is something of foil for this) and mocking those who are out-of-synch, or more appropriately, those in-synch with the "popular" fad. David Eden's work in *Gilbert and Sullivan: The Creative Partnership* attempts to impose a rather strict Freudian psycho-analysis upon Gilbert and his works, which I disagree with in the extreme persistence and the degree to which he pursues it, though the consideration of the details leading to his case are often quite useful and revealing. These are a few of the sources that attempt an overall critique; I will bring more in as I look at the operas and roles individually.

There is no debating, in the minds of most modern-day popular critics, that Gilbert was a blatant and unforgivable misogynist.[32] In my own occasional discussions of my dissertation with self-avowed Gilbert and Sullivan fans, the question always arises, "What are you going to do about his terrible misogyny, though?" And I often respond, as I contend here, that while his behavior in private life was undoubtedly inappropriate at times, his forthright, often indelicate portraits of women are not necessarily anti-woman. After all, drama as an art form is open to interpretation more than any other verbal medium, and Gilbert is, first and foremost, a dramatist. Furthermore, his non-musical works contain more fleshed-out portraits of

[32] As Andrew Crowther relates, in a discussion of a 2015 *Mikado* revival, "Stuart Jeffries, interviewing Mike Leigh in the Guardian, wrote of the "unremitting sexism" of another G&S opera, *Iolanthe*, while Rupert Christiansen in the Telegraph referred to Gilbert as a "classically terrible old sexist" and, in a separate piece, to "Gilbert's relentless sexism" (*The Guardian* 20 Nov. 2015).

unconventional Victorian womanhood than many of the operas allow, many of whom are markedly sympathetic and even ground-breaking. Mrs. Van Brugh in the drama *Charity* is one such eccentric heroine, who boldly calls out the sexual double-standard under the surface of Victorian society (indeed, one that is written into the marriage laws themselves), proclaiming to an uncompromising male character "I plead for those who have had the world against them from the first—who with blunted-weapons and untutored hands have fought society single-handed, and fallen in the unequal fight. . . . I am inexpressibly shocked and pained at the terrible theory you have advanced . . . There is one sin for which there is no pardon – when the sinner is a woman!" (105). This emboldened plea throws different light on the unorthodox, often unflattering, characterization of women in the operas; and, after all, is unflattering the worst thing, in a climate where "flattering" is the go-to strategy in male behavior toward women, often masking patronizing dismissiveness? Indeed no, it is this very refusal to "flatter" women that makes Gilbert stand out among his peers (and even from his musical collaborator, as we shall see), and it is not necessarily a sign of antipathy. It is through his unique, "unflattering" characterization that, to quote Stedman, "the middle-aged comic spinster took on an energy and independence which dramatists before and after him gave only to the high-spirited heroines" ("From Dame to Woman," 44). Denis Denisoff comments on Gilbert and Sullivan's Dandy Aesthetes in *Patience* with a similar observation, and one that can equally apply to the female roles in question: "Gilbert positioned his work between, on one hand, a comic critique of unconventional sexuality and, on the other, an appreciation of the titillating that had been read as a

sympathetic deflation of the image of such unconventionally as threatening" (57). He also illustrates this fine line of backhanded endorsement with this explanation: "By limiting any sense of chastisement that might arise from such a distancing strategy as parody, authors were able to turn the ambiguities surrounding gender, sexuality, and identity to greater comic advantage. Whether intentional or not, this means of enhancing levity carried with it a tacit acceptance of the subject being parodied as not a serious threat to the status quo" (56). In the end, I wholeheartedly agree with Andrew Crowther's acknowledgement of what I would call the hidden "diva power" in these low-voiced roles: "There is a dark strength in these characters – at least partly because they are the mouthpieces for shocking truths" (*The Guardian*, 20 Nov. 2015).

To return to the matter at hand, though, in spite of these glimmers of audacity, Gilbert and Sullivan do not turn out to be the much needed sea-change in the diva-desert that is the Victorian Era. And the question of why there are no prominent "showcase" diva roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan canon (the musical phenomenon that becomes the most successful and arguably most original musical and theatrical offering that England produces during the "land without music" era) turns out to be an easy one to answer. Gilbert himself was the diva in his company, and there could be room for no others. He was the puppet master of his troupe, as close to a real-life Svengali as can be found, and no doubt the pre-cursor to the micro-managing "show runner" of contemporary Britain. Like the iron fist that Julian Fellowes ruled with on *Downton Abbey*, or Steven Moffat's autocratic leadership of the new *Dr. Who* series, W. S. Gilbert ruled his kingdom unequivocally. Even his mildest critics could not help but

concede that he was "was somewhat of a martinet in his stage management."[33] The micromanaging of performance practice, which reaches a peak with Shaw's elaborate stage-directions, undoubtedly gets it start with Gilbert, as one of the first playwright/producer/directors (for the record, second after T. W Robertson, but the first to exploit the role fully)[34]. The initial agreement that Gilbert lays out with D'Oyly Carte, negotiating an unprecedented degree of control and involvement for both himself and Sullivan, demonstrates the tip of this iceberg. Below is the letter dictating their terms to Mr Morton, manager of the Opera Comique in 1876:

> Dear Mr Morton,
> We have considered your proposal, and we are prepared to write an opera for your theatre on the following terms:
>
> 4.4. each night guaranteeing a minimum of 120 performances in town and country, within eight months of first production.
> Of this, 105 to be paid to each of us in advance
> We are to select our own company
> The piece is to be in two or three acts, as we may deem to be more suitable.
> The entire control of rehearsals to be in our hands.
> The selection of the subject to rest with us. (Quoted in Pearson, 90)

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[33] From Hollingshead, *Gaiety Chronicles* "Mr W. S. Gilbert, the author of my opening burlesque, maintained his friendly relations with the theatre. He was somewhat of a martinet in his stage management, but he generally knew what he wanted, was more often right than wrong, and was consequently an able director of his own pieces" (98).

[34] Pearson, P 72 "Nearly all of Gilbert's quarrels derived from the attrition of rehearsals. He could get on quite harmoniously with people in normal conditions; but when he wanted a thing said or done on stage in a particular way, he went on repeating his commands, his tone becoming more and more peremptory; and as it was a relatively new thing for an author to produce plays, Tom Robertson being the first of the dramatist stage managers, Gilbert the second, the actors still thought they knew more about production and performance than the man who provided what they would have called the raw material, and regarded dictation from the writer as an affront. Robertson had a sort of gentleman's agreement with the Bancrofts to produce his own plays, author and actors blending so well that the little theatre in Charlotte Street seemed to house a family party. But Gilbert had to deal with all sorts of actors and managers, and he was the first author to fight for the dramatist's right to have his plays presented as closely as possible to his conception of them. Pinero succeeded hi, and then Shaw, after whom the business falls into the hands of a new race of men called 'producers'/ Gilbert's battles, then, seemed unavoidable in retrospect, and perhaps it needed a man of his ruthlessly dominating nature to rescue the drama from the actors" (72)

Steadman elaborates on this iron-clad insistence:

> "The physical embodiment of his work, too, was in a form as perfect as he could make it after he had gained control, and at the Savoy a very tight control, of his theatre. 'The supreme importance of careful rehearsing is not sufficiently recognized in England. . . . He believed than any author incapable of directing his own plays was at a great disadvantage and that his stage directions were as much a part of the play as the dialogue itself. For Gilbert, no manager had a right 'to interpose between me and the realization of my ideas.' (letter to John Hare, 30 January 1878)

Consequently, his contracts and stipulations included provisos that he was to be paramount in stage management in the widest sense. In short, he was a man of broader practical theatrical experience than any other important dramatist—for not even Shakespeare designed costumes for his own plays. Gilbert often did, and supervised the sets as well" (216-217). His insistence on artistic control with theatre owners and managers was nothing compared to his interaction with his cast and crew, from whom he demanded no less than total obedience. George Grossmith, the actor who originated nearly all of the comic baritone leads in the G&S canon, summarizes Gilbert's behavior as such:

> The musical rehearsals are child's play in comparison with the stage rehearsals. Mr. Gilbert is a perfect autocrat, insisting that his words should be delivered, even to an inflection of the voice, as he dictates. He will stand on the stage beside the actor or actress, and repeat the words with appropriate action over and over again, until they are delivered as he desires them to be. In some instances, of course, he allows a little license, but very little. He has great patience at times; and, indeed, he needs it, for occasionally one or other of the company, through inaccurate ear or other cause, will not catch the proper action or inflection. From the beginning it has been the custom, if possible, to allot some small part to a member of the chorus. The girls have nearly always benefited by the chance, and some have risen to the foremost ranks. The men are not so fortunate, I regret to say. They do not seem to be so quick. Gilbert has nearly been driven frantic (and so have the onlookers for the matter of that) because a

> sentence has been repeated with a false accent. (George Grossmith, *A Society Clown* chapter 6, 154)

The stories demonstrating this range from his frequent mocking of his leads by turning their own criticism back on him, but the most egregious examples of his autocratic tendencies often occurred in his work with the chorus. As Hibbert states,

> Sometimes Gilbert would lose control of himself completely, bellowing at the chorus in a paroxysm of irritation or even taking hold of a prominent offender and shaking him by the shoulders until his teeth rattled, then jumping about the stage to demonstrate what true vitality was, crying out at the top of his voice with a pause between each word, "remember -- ladies -- and -- gentlemen -- you've -- got -- to -- do -- your -- darndest -- in -- this -- passage -- or -- it -- will -- go -- flat." "Gilbert's the only man I ever met," recorded one cast member after one of these outbursts, "who could swear straight on for five minutes without stopping to think and without repeating himself." (149-151)

Occasionally he went so far in his enforcement that his co-author was moved to protest; as Steadman relates: 'At the Savoy, Gilbert therefore preferred to use relative or absolute novices, who had 'no bad tricks to unlearn' ("A Chat with Decima Moore"). Gilbert worked painstakingly, spending hours in practicing tiny movements and facial expressions until Sullivan complained that the chorus was work not by having to repeat the music constantly while an entrance or exit was worked out (Letter to Carte, 26 March 1889) (217). He was so strict in the carrying out of his vision that he did not stop his surveillance after opening night. He had people in the audience throughout the run of his plays, including his wife on many occasions, to report on continued enforcement, and even embraced the new technology of tele-communication, having a phone installed backstage at the Savoy so he could issue stage instructions from home starting in 1882 with *Iolanthe* (Stedman, 192). But

surely his most extreme examples of his taking of the diva mantle in his company are his "cat-fights" with the women who occasionally attempted to assert themselves against him. Henrietta Hodson's is perhaps the most extreme story. He had a "general disagreement with her at rehearsals," and she declined to follow his advice regarding the character she was playing. As her side of the story goes, he spreads slander, supposedly behind her back, and when it gets back to her, she takes recourse through a solicitor, and he writes an apology that he requests be kept private (according to a letter "A few days afterwards, I received a letter from Mr. Gilbert imploring me not to publish the apology, as, if I did, he said, that he could never show his face again" (Eden, 58). She then appeared in a revival of his *Pygmalion and Galatea* soon after. Gilbert tried to prevent her appearing in the play, but when this failed subjected her to the following treatment at rehearsals (December 1876): "The rehearsals commenced. Mr. Gilbert's whole behavior to me was a studied insult. He neither spoke to me nor looked at me, but only recognized my presence with a distant bow. Mrs. Arthur Lewis (Miss Kate Terry) used to sit on the stage, and, when I was rehearsing my part, he talked and laughed with her; when I was offstage all conversation ceased, and he paid attention to what was taking place" (59). Gilbert echoes the same behavior with Madge Robertson, who "resisted Gilbert's wishes in connection with the play" As Eden relates, "He would take a party to a box—presumably not during public performance—pay great attention while the other members of the cast were speaking, but turn his back on the stage whenever Madge Robertson appeared. He would then talk audibly with his friends, punctuating the conversation with loud laughs" (59). To

look at it from his perspective, he emphatically did not want the spotlight, but he wanted complete control over the artistic message that was communicated, which is the essential issue for the operatic diva. As Pearson again states, "Many of his quarrels were due to the feeling that he alone knew exactly what playgoers wanted and that the actors in his plays were more anxious to exploit their personalities than to do justice to the author" (63) and "Some of his irritation with actors may have been due to the strain of overwork, but more was caused by their refusal to accept his advice without question" (Pearson 66). Surprisingly, these antics did not seem to diminish the loyalty and affection that he inspired in his cast and crew: "In spite of his autocratic conduct, Gilbert was much more popular with the companies they controlled than Sullivan. The performers, especially those who played small parts and the members of the chorus, trusted him implicitly, knew he would guard their interests, appreciated his generosity, found him genial away from work, tirelessly patient during work, ready to champion them in any dispute, and always polite in manners" (158). This strict demand for adherence was often punishing in the enforcement: "An actor who introduced an unapproved gag might be fined half a week's salary" (Steadman, 218). However, it also resulted in a degree of inclusion, bringing the actors into his inner-circle, and including them in the expression of his artistic vision, in order to maximize understanding and artistic sympathy. As Steadman again asserts, "Very early in his career, he had begun printing his plays 'as manuscripts' when it was an innovation to put the full text into the actors' hands" (219). So Gilbert was thin-skinned, easily offended jittery, anxious, high strung,

hyper-conscious of his perceived worth, sensitive to being slighted, in need of deference, and often in the company of a younger, less experienced "squad," strictly insistent on "his way or the highway". And yet he was also meticulous, dedicated, loyal, tireless, and resolutely determined to communicate his very distinct artistic vision. Also, he came up with some of the strongest, most resilient and independent female characters in Victorian theatre, certainly in comedies. Perhaps these characters are actually patterned after the man himself.

Gilbert's personal foibles were flaws are often largely in reaction to the cultural moment in which he lived and worked. He is a product of his time, to be sure, and his tendency to lash out against perceived slight is often not malicious, but due to extreme sensitivity (thin skin, so to speak) and fears of inadequacy, to do with appearance and social expectations. (he has no issues with his perceived genius and knowledge of how things should be, mind you, but has more than a little anxiety about living up to society's expectations in more traditional ways). Yet he is a tower of strength when it comes to insisting on his way, with a great degree of self-assurance, coupled with an extreme fear of reproach, and a difficulty perceiving disagreements from any perspective but his own. This leads him to an insistence on agreement from those around him, which sometimes bordered on cruelty, which is apparent in his interactions with his company, as well as beyond them. Whatever the cause, this self-consciousness to the degree that it inhibits empathy was a well-documented aspect of his personality, and is perhaps what feeds into his occasional fascination with torture and the macabre. Eden chronicles this meticulously, leaning a

bit heavily on this tendency as Gilbert's defining characteristic, in his strict Freudian analysis of him. Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in his pointing out Gilbert's fondness for murder (61) collection of macabre objects (63), focus on onstage torture (*Ruddigore*): "Gilbert chose to depict the moment of torture on stage. Having refused to commit his crime Robin Oakapple is surrounded by ghosts, who make gestures towards him as he writhes in pain, 'It gets worse by degrees'. In performance the effect of the scene is usually mitigated by an unconvincing mime of agony from the actor playing Robin; our concern here is with the mind of the man who thought such a scene funny enough to include in a comic opera" (63). This is preoccupation with violence and torture also comes through in the setting for *Yeoman of the Guard*, and the character of Shadbolt describing fine points of thumbscrew operation (64). Not to mention the prominent characteristics of the Mikado in the opera bearing his name, with his talk of "boiling oil, burial alive, execution, suicide, extraction of teeth, and, of course, the gentle art of self-decapitation" (Eden, 64). In his condemnation/psychoanalysis of Gilbert, Eden asserts that he is intent on "persecuting women," an assertion that I disagree with, as the following will demonstrate, and also diagnoses him as a sadist, based (groundlessly) on sexual repression. Gilbert's difficulty with empathy, and seeming lack of understanding regarding what is acceptable regarding women is inescapably resonant with our current political climate. Though it is understood that it is rude to talk about a woman's body in a negative way in polite company—and smacks of overt sexism (we like our sexism covert), our new President doesn't seem to understand that, and

neither did Gilbert. Neither man seems to recognize the unspoken decree that there is a line not to be crossed. In Gilbert's case, he did not seem to perceive this behavior as harsh; perhaps he does not see women as objects in need of extra protection, but instead as equals, human beings who suffer due to ridiculous social constraints. This would be backed up by his extreme defensiveness when he perceives that he is "attacked" by women who clearly have less social and political sway than he does, like Mrs. Hodson and the Comtese de Bremont. Then again, perhaps his portrayals (because they are all his portrayals, as he insures with his minute micromanaging) are the result of extreme de-humanizing, in seeing people, and women in particular, only as objects, and employing no filter in expressing his ridicule of their collective absurdity.

These are some of the most prominent aspects of Gilbert's character, from the aberrant fixation on torture to the hidden vulnerability and concern with not living up to societal expectation, combined with an almost shield like strength of character and self-assurance regarding his genius and unquestionable excellence in other areas, often those that are undervalued by society. And yet, these are the very qualities that end up being explored in his female characters, those who are often the most sympathetic, sometimes exposing their raw humanity to an uncomfortable degree. Gilbert channeled himself into these portraits of vulnerable strength and societal defiance, and yet he is continually criticized for his harsh, unfair treatment of women (particularly the lower voiced women, who are widely patterned after the drag role "dame" characters of burlesque and pantomime). As Steadman asserts in her

discussion of Gilbert's portrayal of these characters, in her article from *Suffer and Be Still, Women in the Victorian Age*,

> Dames long for youthful love and are robustly revengeful when slighted. They dye their hair and pinch or pad their figures as they pursue reluctant men. . . . It is now an article of dubious faith that Gilbert treated his dames with unusual cruelty, even making them admit their lack of beauty. Yet, in the same situation, male dames would have caused laughter, not compunction by such confessions. Interestingly enough, no reviewer caviled at Gilbert's elderly amorous men such as Sir Marmaduke or the Lord Chancellor, and the so-called 'hatred' of elderly women is another of the fallacies attached to the librettist's personality. (30-31)

In what follows, I plan to investigate the unique, convention-defying, often gender-bending aspects of these low-voiced women's roles, in a consideration of not only where the divas went in the late Victorian era, but also how Gilbert creates alternate portraits of femininity at a time in which the façade of strict gender norms was just beginning to crumble.

Pirates of Penzance and *H.M.S. Pinafore*

The earliest examples of prominent mezzo or contralto leads in Gilbert and Sullivan's works are Buttercup, from *HMS Pinafore*, and Ruth from *Pirates of Penzance*. Since both women function similarly, as working class, no-longer-young women who assert themselves outside the domestic sphere, I will discuss them together. The early operas prior to these either have no parts written for lower voice women, in the case of *Trial by Jury*, or have small, relatively undeveloped roles, in the case of *The Sorcerer* and *Thespis*. Some critics assert that the unseen character of the Judge's ex-wife, his mentor's "elderly, ugly daughter," is the hidden mezzo part in *Trial by Jury*, an assumption that would seem grossly presumptuous and misogynistic, were it not

rather obviously the case. As Jane Stedman's research confirms, Gilbert and Sullivan's lower voiced women generally grow out of the burlesque trope of the "Dame" role: men dressed as aging, exaggeratedly unattractive women, and therefore made safe targets for ridicule. In many ways, the two were part of the formation and ground-breaking process in the framing of alto roles, since low-voiced prominent solo roles were a new addition to opera, since the 1850's, as discussed in the introduction. Characteristically, Gilbert and Sullivan had very definite ideas of how they wanted to shape this new phenomenon; while they agreed early on that they would not indulge in the "low" comedy of cross-dressing, this does not prevent them from using the short-hand of the Dame caricature when it suits them. And "caricature" describes Gilbert's characters in more ways than one; as a passing acquaintance with the operas will prove, Gilbert's version of characterization is more focused on how to best display his satire and needling humor than developing realistic or plausible people. Which makes it even more surprising that the women in his operas break through the stereotypes of the day. But, as the characters of Buttercup and Ruth will demonstrate, they break out of the stagnant "Dame" category in significant ways.

Gilbert and Sullivan's mezzo and alto roles are a radical re-interpretation of dame roles, which take the women out of the usual circulating value based on beauty, money, and accomplishment, and gives them romantic entanglements anyway, subverting the standard, accepted expectations of women in society. To start briefly with Buttercup, she stands out in contrast to both low voice parts from the immediately preceding show *The Sorcerer,* Lady Sangazure and Mrs Partlet. While the two of them

operate primarily as mothers, safely functioning within the domestic sphere, and only secondarily as objects of romantic entanglement, Buttercup is an unmarried career woman, first working as a wet nurse, and within the opera, as a Bumboat woman. We see her prominently acting in her professional role, also in contrast to the "sisters, cousins, and aunts" who base their status and social value on their relation to the prominent man in their lives, Sir Joseph. Like Ruth, though, she comes in to her own, so to speak, in her second career; her first, more domestic (and ethically dubious) work as child-minder or "baby-farmer" results in the fateful mishap of confusing her charges, creating the apparent catastrophe of both Ralph and Captain Corcoran functioning within the "wrong" role and social class for 20 years. Her second career as bum-boat woman, however, is, albeit by her own testimonial (in the song "Little Buttercup"), a rousing success. In her capacity as traveling purveyor of provisions to ships near port, she demonstrates her aptness at developing working relations with the sailors and ship's crew, as well as her shrewd sales techniques, playing to her audience with a list of tempting products and ego-massaging encouragement. Buttercup's failure at the socially acceptable "feminine" profession of child-minder, and later success as a floating shopkeeper, fulfilling an essential role in public life and commerce, ultimately functions as a push toward encouraging the rights of women to engage in the public sphere and make meaningful contributions through work outside the home.

As a character, though, Buttercup breaks further ground, for though she is onstage a relatively short time, she displays a depth and complexity usually reserved for more prominent roles. Furthermore, her character is far from pitiful and unlovable, but,

implausibly, universally appealing. Her final pairing with the former Captain is a surprise to no one; even though she must be considerably older, since she was his nurse. The crew professes their universal adoration of her from the beginning, and the Captain, even when they are separated by supposed class barriers, can't help but pronounce her a "plump and pleasing person." Gilbert himself announces this aspect of her character: "the former Captain pairs off happily with Little Buttercup, whose love according to Gilbert's preliminary prose narrative is 'as tender & romantic. . . as if she were the heroine of the piece" (Steadman, 160). While most of the characters struggle with the petty problems of either enforcing or rebelling against the edicts of class-appropriate courtship and behavior, Buttercup confronts a complex moral dilemma, weighing the difficult choice of doing the "right thing" and telling the truth about mixing up Ralph and Captain Corcoran as children, removing the obstacle that keeps Ralph and his beloved apart, at the cost of exposing herself to censure and ridicule, as well as materially harming the prospects of the man she secretly loves. In the end, she acts unselfishly, and reveals the truth—though it does not end up being too much of a sacrifice, since the decision does result in her romantic union with Corcoran.

Speaking of Buttercup as a romantic lead, it is certainly noteworthy that Buttercup is surprisingly non-sexual, for a bumboat woman in love with a captain 20 years younger than she is (can we say cougar?). Here, in an image of Rosina Brandram, who originated many of contralto leads in Gilbert and Sullivan's operas, we can get an idea of how Buttercup was physically portrayed: (1899 production):

And here, below, are two of Gilbert's illustration from his early *Bab Ballads* which he mines for source material when creating the character of Buttercup (the first is from "The Bumboat Woman's Story," an early version of the switched-at-birth tale, the second from "Captain Reece"):

The drawings communicate the character as all but sex-less; the shapeless attire and diminished, bent posture of indicating age all but erase any signs of sexuality. Of

course, as the *Bab Ballad* Bumboat woman keeps reminding us, she is 70 now, and the time she recounts of dressing as a sailor to follow a handsome ships' captain was when she was only 60 (roughly Buttercup's age). Brandram's costume, showcasing bland innocence in all white, covers her from head to toe all the way up her neck. Her face is the only skin exposed, and her bonnet's bow stands out much more prominently than any part of her body, indicating that this "un-sexed" version of the Bumboat woman carries over to the costuming and characterization of Buttercup (perhaps in part to lend her more professional credibility). The most graphic reference to her in the text is Corcoran's off-hand remark, calling her a "plump and pleasing person," which, unless implausibly embellished with a leer, is hardly lustful. Musically, Buttercup's solo is amiable but terribly repetitive. As Williamson justly evaluates, "Little Buttercup, in spite of the exaggerated fame of her C major waltz air, "I'm called Little Buttercup," is not musically an interesting part" (63). And though Dunhill praises its "artless simplicity," in his "Sullivan's Comic Operas," the song itself grows tedious, with its endless lists repeated to the same melody, unless it includes quite a bit of suggestive stage business to enliven it (66). In fact, the "artless simplicity" is remarkable in and of itself, since Buttercup herself is anything but artless and simple, as the plot reveals. The music accompanying the culmination of the plot, the disclosure of her egregious error, is, as Dunhill calls it "quite undramatically treated," (73). Unsurprisingly, the mirror image of this scene, in *The Gondoliers*, is also revealed hastily, and allows little space for tearful reunion of mother and son, or other sentimental nonsense.

In a minor way, Jessie Bond's D'Oyly Carte premiere role as Cousin Hebe in this show provides another untraditional perspective on women's roles. On one hand, she is only the most prominent of Sir Joseph's hangers on, all of whom identify themselves in relation to a man instead of in their own right. But, like Jane in *Patience*, she actively pursues the man she desires, contrary to the taboo against feminine agency in courtship, and what's more, she is a successful suitor, who ends up rewarded with her prize. (Though for Sir Joseph, she is more of a punishment for the sin of making himself ridiculous in reaching too high, as he was aiming for Josephine, the character representing the younger and more beautiful object.) But it is Buttercup's character, as a non-sexualized, independently acting woman whose choices drive the culmination of the story's plot, in which Gilbert not only subverts romantic sexualized ideas of love and its rewards, but also provides an example of a strong, independent woman; with the next opera, Ruth will end up transcending notions of prurient sexuality altogether, by the second act. But since Buttercup is not the object of a romance plot until the end, she escapes the unfortunate trap of functioning only as a sexual object—in fact, she is the one who exerts her feminine romantic gaze on Corcoran as the secret object of her affections.

On the other hand, Ruth's attachment for Frederick at the beginning of *Pirates of Penzance* is not remotely secret. I use the term "attachment" instead of affection, because she does not express an emotional intimacy with him, but instead attaches herself to him in a desperate, eleventh-hour attempt to salvage the ruins of her life, due to the situation she has created with her own professional ineptitude. Like Buttercup,

Ruth serves as an example of women unfit for the domestic sphere, who flourishes later in an untraditional, male-dominated profession. Her early incompetence as a nursery maid extends beyond the unfortunate mistake of the erroneous pledging of Frederick's apprenticeship to a pirate instead of to a pilot; as she herself confesses: "I was a stupid nurserymaid, on breakers always steering" (I, I, line 49). She further reveals her lack of fitness to carry out basic child-care responsibilities as Frederick's nurse in her failure to exercise basic judgment, which should have questioned or corrected the error in hearing. Then again, this could be seen as a critique of the lack of agency that is cultivated or desired in women and/or servants of the day--no one expects that she would question what she understood to be the command of Frederick's father, no matter how misguided. Her failure to adapt to the demands of child-care is not the only indication that she is better fit for public life; since she commits the egregious error of not displaying traditional beauty, she is deemed not perform decorative functions expected of women; as Frederick warns, "what a terrible thing it would be if I were to marry this innocent person, and then find out that she is, on the whole, plain!" (I, I, line 110). But Frederick's ultimate rejection of her based on her "plainness" is not a tragic, one-sided love story. Ruth is no "lovesick maiden," but a resourceful, opportunistic strategist, who finds herself in the difficult situation of having spent her waning marriageable years working for pirates, and sees Frederick as her only hope of fulfilling the role of Victorian wife. One wonders if her heart is really in it, though--she uses what she perceives as Frederick's affection for her in her efforts to plead her case for their union ("And Ruth, your own Ruth, whom you love so well, and who has won her

middle-aged way into your boyish heart, what is to become of her?" (I, I, 97-99)), but makes no such pronouncements of her own. She is also aware of her limitations, and instead of awkwardly deploying sexuality, she tries to win him by tricks of reason and quasi-maternal obligation. Furthermore, she seems to like being a pirate aide-de-camp, even before Frederick rejects her: employing sea-faring metaphors like "on breakers always steering" indicates that she has internalized pirating life. She does have a sense of honor herself, though, and dedication to hard work, which is evident in her confession:

> I soon found out, beyond all doubt, the scope of this disaster,
> But I hadn't the face to return to my place, and break it to my master.
> A nurserymaid is not afraid of what you people call work,
> So I made up my mind to go as a kind of piratical maid-of-all-work. (I. i. 57-60)

Her reluctance to face up to the error that she has made by confessing to her employer no doubt exposes a serious character failing, but she defies expectation in her bravery and versatility. It is in the second act that she exhibits the greatest strength of character, though, with her decision to abandon her misguided attempts to achieve the "conventional" goal of marriage, and instead makes a bold commitment to the alternative lifestyle of pirate in her own right, presenting a decidedly alternative version of Victorian womanhood.

Ruth's character and horizons expand once Frederick abandons her to follow General Stanley's daughters, as she returns to the pirate gang in a new capacity, not as Frederick's minder, but as a full-fledged member of the group. We can see this when she unreflectingly identifies herself as one of them, in her next appearance in the paradox song. After explaining to Frederick that he is technically still bound to the

apprenticeship, due to his leap year birthday, she comforts him with: “You are glad now, I'll be bound, that you spared us. You would never have forgiven yourself when you discovered that you had killed *two of your comrades*” (II, i, 213-215). Indeed, she has not only committed herself to a course of piracy, she assumes a leadership role, venturing ashore as the Pirate King’s second, taking on the perilous mission of infiltrating General Stanley’s police fortified compound in order to approach her now-hostile former charge. Her previous lukewarm designs on Frederick are, at this point, completely abandoned. She embraces piracy as something of a natural calling, when, later in the scene, she reveals a bloodthirsty side, demonstrating her aptitude for this profession:

> Away, away! my heart's on fire;
> I burn, this base deception to repay.
> This very night my vengeance dire
> Shall glut itself in gore. Away, away! (II, i, 258-261)

And in the same song:

> ALL. Yes, yes! to-night the traitor dies!
> RUTH. To-night he dies!
> KING. Yes, or early to-morrow. (II, i, 270-272)

Realistically, she has much more of an aptitude for piracy as a vocation than the Pirate King and his lapsed House-of-Peers compatriots. Her ruthless (no pun intended) embrace of the brutality and violence required to succeed at piracy contrasts with their reluctance to attack orphans, and the ease with which their would-be victims practice on their gullibility.

Ruth is not the first theatrical depiction of a woman following the path of turning pirate, or "female brigand;" Kate Santley's role as Princess Toto from the opera by the same name, in Gilbert's 1876 collaboration, sets a fierce precedent. But Ruth is both shrewder and more comical than this alluring, dangerous character, which the image below corroborates. She is also a far cry from Carmen, to whom she is compared in a 1980's era examination of the operas (91-92, Jefferson), who delights in manipulating those around her with her deliberate seductive exertions, where Ruth, a reluctant, awkward seductress, makes only a single attempt. The costume choices for early productions of the opera reveal some basis for comparison, though. Ruth's second act costume reveals a nursery maid transformed into a bold, cross between a pirate and a gypsy, seen below (The first image is Alice Barnett, the original Ruth, in 1880; the second is Rosina Brandham in a 1900 revival, the third is Bessie Armytage in the 1882 D'Oylo Carte touring company, and the last is Kate Santley in the 1876 premiere of *Princess Toro*[35]):

[35] From the online Gilbert and Sullivan Archive (http://www.gilbertandsullivanarchive.org/pirates/carte/doc.html)

These images attest to Ruth's independence and defiance, with Brandram audaciously confronting the camera with her own evaluating glance in return, instead of a demure, accommodating smile, and Barnett and Armytage not even meeting the glance of the camera as onlooker, and instead look ahead to the coming conflict of *Pirates* and the law with confident defiance—Armytage almost approaching avenging angel, with her clenched fist and intractable jutting chin. Perhaps this impudence was too far from the range of propriety, though, since after around 1910, production practice was modified to what it has largely remained at today, changing Ruth's second act costume to a more shapeless, stereotypical pirate look, instead of the more Mediterranean infused precursors. Here is an example from a 1925 program insert, and from the costume designs of the 1929 Savoy season (same source):

As seen here, there is a hint of the gypsy in earlier Ruth costumes, which would normally bring up associations of Arline in *Bohemian Girl*, or *Carmen* (which premiered in London a few years before), but if the association is there, it is a parody of the seductive, sly gypsy woman. And yet, there is a certain freedom in second act Ruth. In the first act, she is still trying to salvage her respectability by trying to put together a marriage with Frederick, but she is never convincingly seductive, and once she has no hope of this "last-ditch" effort, she is free to pursue what is clearly her true calling, that of bloodthirsty pirate.

Ruth's music is also markedly more engaging and challenging than Buttercup's, starting with her Act I solo. While it occurs in roughly the same place in the action as Buttercup's, Ruth's "When Frederick was a Little Lad" relates a compelling story. When compared with Buttercup's grocery list, it is already clear that Gilbert has expanded the possibilities for this contralto showcase number. More than that, though,

is the melodic and harmonic complexity of the song itself. The alternating major and minor keys playfully illustrate the swings of Ruth's character, and the suspense building minor sections drive the plot of her revelation in a way that commands audience attention. Thus, in addition to setting the scene and introducing her as a character, both composer and lyricist succeed in generating interest, not only in Ruth herself, but in the situation of the rest of the characters. Ruth's music later in the show also does not disappoint; she joins with Frederick and the Pirate King for the memorable "Paradox" song—one of the frequently encored numbers in the show, and also one that is integrally tied to the plot (though unlike Ruth's opening solo, the music is not particularly "in tune" with her character, and aligns much more with the Pirate King's sense of play). The trio solidifies Ruth's character transformation, though, both in acknowledging her cleverness, as well as her capacity to manipulate and exert power over Frederick. Ruth develops beyond trope of pitiable yet laughable older woman who pines for love, when she moves out of what was always an unconvincing romantic effort, into part of the pirate gang. Of course, this is done largely for comic juxtaposition, playing against the assumption that women are the "weaker sex," as well as to take the bite out of the criminal activities of the soon-to-be-redeemed pirate/peers. Nevertheless, it acts as something of a declaration of advantageous potential for women beyond childrearing, partly because Ruth and Buttercup are both patently unsuited for this task. The acceptance of the fact that some women just aren't domestic, and a woman can find value beyond the realm of caregiver/child-minder, goes against the current of contemporary theatrical convention, but is accepted as normal for many real-

life women, for example, the women who work in the theatrical company itself—Jessie Bond's career demonstrate this case as well. It is likely significant that Gilbert and his wife were childless as well. Regardless, Ruth's character is an early example putting forth the model that loyalty and camaraderie can end up being more important than attractiveness and docility, even for (gasp) women.

Patience

The next opera, *Patience*, proves to be one of the more interesting adaptations of the dame formula, in the character of Jane. Gilbert is actually kinder to Jane than any of the previous Dame characters, though he is often accused of being cruel to her. First of all, she ends up making the most fortuitous marriage in the end of the opera, and it is one that the Duke goes out of his way to arrange with her—thus marriage to her is not the punishment for over-reaching as it is for Cousin Hebe in *Pinafore*. (The "just desserts" of Sir Joseph and Cousin Hebe's union is harsh not only toward women, but takes a dim view of marriage altogether.) Jane being matched with the Duke may seem like it is out of left field, but in fact it makes more sense than any other ending (more on that later). The second, and more significant way that Jane is better treated by her creator is that Jane actually has a voice, and is given a chance to defend her actions, and share her motivation and justification for her actions. Her solo aria, placed prominently in the beginning of the second act, is often cited as a harsh, jarring exposure of feminine aging. In fact, it presents an opportunity for Jane to make a connection in candid soliloquy, and, through her frank self-exposure, create empathy for her discomfiting, all too real concerns about her future in a society that values beauty and docility in women

(neither of which she possesses, and her self-recognized "allures," such as they are, are rapidly fading.) This revealing confrontation with the reality of the situation in which all Victorian women were placed exposes an essential truth about the restrictive expectations of women, and forces a sort of reluctant identification with unfortunate Jane. Audiences may have been uncomfortable about having to confront this truth, and admit the limited use value that society allowed women outside of marriage, and instead of attempting to address the underlying injustice, lash out at Gilbert for revealing the cruel position that Jane has been forced into by society.

Many critics, particularly Gilbert's contemporaries, typically side with Sullivan, in their condemnation of Gilbert's characterization of Jane. Baily alludes to this widening rift, saying: "to its spellbound audiences *Patience* seemed a perfect collaboration between Sullivan and Gilbert, and yet today we can see within this opera another cause of future discontents. Look at the character of Lady Jane, at whose autumnal charms Gilbert pokes a finger of fun ('my charms are ripe, Reginald, and already they are decaying')" (Baily 217). In fact, this excerpt reveals that Gilbert does not poke fun at Lady Jane, actually quite the opposite. In this line (and the scene in general) he grants Jane a self-awareness of her flaws and foibles that is rare in Gilbert and Sullivan characters. We need only think back to Ruth, and her seeming lack of awareness of her plainness in the opening scene of *Pirates*. This reads as either deliberate deception on Ruth's part (which makes her much less sympathetic than Jane's candid assessment of her appearance) or unaware of how she appears in comparison to others, which is surely crueler. Wren further complicates this by

asserting that "Jane too is far more real than her Gilbert and Sullivan predecessors. Her strong-willed pursuit of Bunthorne gives her a clarity they lack. Jane is so human, in fact, that audiences usually take her side against her creator, Gilbert himself. 'Silvered Is the Raven Hair' expresses a fear of aging and loss of beauty that still resonates for women everywhere, and audiences don't like seeing it made fun of" (113). First of all, this misreads Gilbert. The point of the song (as I see it) is to create that sympathy, and draw a contrast between Jane and the other maidens. Second, who says that it is only women who fear death and "loss of beauty?" Contemporary reviewers lavished praise on the production as a whole, but recoiled from Gilbert's characterization of Jane: "The Athenaeum found Gilbert's libretto 'as near perfection as possible;' the Pall Mall Gazette considered the stage management 'beyond all praise'. And he had managed to find a permanent resting place for "Crushed again!" cut from the dialogue of *Pinafore*. Several critics, however, took umbrage at Lady Jane's 'Silvered is the Raven Hair,' sung by massive Alice Barnett." 'Unnecessary and disagreeable," said the Pall Mall Gazette" (as reported by Steadman, 185). This wincing discomfort is perhaps more telling than Gilbert's characterization in the first place, which I will consider below.

Jane starts the opera as the unsympathetic "other;" as the self-appointed leader of the lovesick maidens, she is part of the hangers on, who are generally positioned as sycophantic pretenders, and exposed to ridicule by the opera.[36] Her interaction with her charges, schooling them in what they need to do to displace Patience in Bunthorne's affections, makes her something of a window into the beliefs and motivations of

[36] "the authors were not attacking poetry or true aestheticism but rather pretenders to that art" (101, Wren).

aesthetic proselytes. Of the aesthetic maidens, she and Angela are the only ones who speak for themselves outside of the group interactions, and she alone takes the liberty of communicating with the audience directly (though at times her soliloquy is directed toward Bunthorne). It is in this moment that she becomes surprisingly relatable: like the town of Titipu in *Mikado*, the opera presents a surprise reversal, revealing that what was thought to be a window to a strange and absurd "other" is in fact only a representation of a side of the self, and has been all along. Jane is more than just a silly girl trying to ape the trendy fad of the day, she is a woman trying to fight against the tide of cultural expectation that would make her obsolete. And she is using every tool available in her arsenal, up to and including using the insipid trends of the day in her favor.

Jane and Bunthorne are the only two characters who are given the prominence of speaking directly to the audience, allowing them to reveal themselves unguardedly. By taking the audience in their confidence, and leaving themselves vulnerable, they both make gains in trust and respect, through for Jane, her revelation prompts sympathy and identification with her plight, and for Bunthorne, his disclosure makes his true character clearer, and thus less sympathetic. Both expose their lack of true devotion to the aesthetic movement, but Bunthorne's motives are duplicitous in an effort to gain attention and admiration from a bevy or maidens, while Jane struggles with a much more common plight. Where Jane's soliloquy wins sympathy, Bunthorne's solidifies his position as the true villain of the piece. By taking his listeners in his confidence, he lets them in on the joke, and makes them complicit in his plot. He mocks the maidens and their obsession with aestheticism, even while admitting his weakness, the unvarnished

desire for adoration and attention. In admitting his flaws, and confessing to the audience, he creates a different sort of connection, though not one of identification, and not one that reminds everyone of a gender disparity cannot be easily corrected.

The character of the Duke also acts as something of a social justice crusader in disguise—he tries to effect change as dramatically as he can at the end of the opera, redistributing wealth and social approval in an almost robin hood fashion. Also, like Jane, attempts to help his peers in order to achieve fairness and harmony, though both counsel others to achieve this through affectation, or at the least on command emotional display. The duke, too, tries to instruct the soldiers in order to accomplish the goal of making the cause of the dragoons more sympathetic--in fact, the "weep, weep, all weep" is, in reality, as much of a schooling in affectation as Jane's instructions to the maidens. But the ends that they are trying to achieve are more generally desirable, since he is trying to achieve social harmony and balance, correcting the imbalance that Bunthorne selfishly creates. And, more significantly, the Duke, like Jane, tries to escape the destiny the world has in store for him, though his desire to be less pampered and respected is far less common than Jane's desire not to be left behind in her old age. Both are called upon to play out a destiny that is not of their own choosing (Jane cannot help her relative plainness, the Duke is born into wealth and privilege), and striving against the inexorable, and in Jane's case, unfair, assumptions of society makes them both easier to cheer for, as strange sorts of "underdogs." So, why are Jane and the Duke perfect for each other? Unlike Grosvenor and Patience, the connection between them is not obvious as soon as they are introduced. And it seems, at first look, that Jane and

Bunthorne are more suited (or, if we are being uncharitable, that they deserve each other) since they both seem to exploit the aesthetic craze for their own selfish ends. But ultimately, their divulged motivations are what set them apart. Bunthorne really just wants attention from an audience (could this be a not-so-thinly veiled critique of actors?) and Jane wants to subvert expectation through the manipulation of social constructs. She accepts that the success of women is judged by their success in the marriage market, and attempts to turn something to her favor by demonstrating her fidelity and usefulness to her prospective mate, and asserting that these qualities, what she terms as "love" in the opening scene, are actually more desirable than youth and beauty.

Not only does she utilize the aesthetic movement as a way to demonstrate her understanding and abilities, she also attempts to assist the rest of the maidens. In conceding her inadequacies she sets herself apart from the rest of the group as more desperate, and also more human. This is not the only way that she differs from the horde of Bunthorne's followers. The maidens and Dragoons are both playing out homosocial attachment as an alternative to heterosexual romance. The ladies are more attached to each other than Bunthorne--walking two by two, drooping and clinging together, etc. It is more about bonding them together than actually pursuing him--none of them are jealous of each other or try to compete, with the exception of Jane. And the Dragoons are vainly appalled that anyone could displace them, due mostly to their self-importance. Their paean to the uniform and trappings of the military lifestyle reveals that they care little for the demise of their heterosexual relationships, and more about

their love for themselves, and all that they see themselves as representing, and by extension each other.

Jane's character is revealed in her attempts to help the maidens toward their common goal of gaining Bunthorne's attention, but she also stands out in her Act II duet with Bunthorne, where she conspires with him to undermine Grosvenor. The assistance she offers is unselfish, since it ultimately supports competing interests, as an effort to trick Grosvenor out of his tribe of hangers-on, and return them to their devotion to Bunthorne. Bunthorne himself recognizes this, replying to her avowal of "I will help you" with "You will? Jane, there's a good deal of good in you, after all!" (II, I, 252-253) His recognition of Jane's willingness to help him achieve his goals, even if they are directly against her stated aim, reveals her rare value, her loyalty and attitude toward romantic relationships as a working partnership. Jane further asserts her frank self-awareness in her reversal of Bunthorne's intended insult, "a pretty damozel *you* are!" to which she replies "No, not Pretty. Massive." (II, I, 242-243) this aggressive insistence on confronting the reality of her perceived "unfeminine" stature, combined with her willingness to join with Bunthorne in a plan that would seem to harm her chances at winning his affections, attest to her confidence in her real worth, which flies in the face of conventional objectified physical display, and societally sanctioned notions of proper femininity[37]. Jane really makes her case for self-knowledge and insisting on the truth

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[37] And foreshadows *The Mikado*, and Katisha's disavowal of false praise of beauty, as well. When Pooh Bah states that "I am surprised that he should have fled from one so lovely" she retorts "That's not true." (II, I, 475-476). Both refuse to participate in the false exchange of beauty as social currency, knowing their worth to be more (also reflecting Gilbert's stern disavowal of flattery and cant). This is in direct opposition to Yum Yum in the same opera, who arrogantly testifies to her own beauty ("yes, I am indeed

ultimately translating to power in her prominently featured song, "Silvered is the Raven Hair," which starts off the second act of the opera. This placement gives her a moment in the spotlight that is not overshadowed by the previous scene, and a chance to plead her case to a refreshed, alert audience—beyond the opening number of the show, this is the prime real estate of the opera. The opening line of the recitative leading in to the song, "Sad is that woman's lot" is strikingly similar to the opening line of Josephine's song from *H M S Pinafore,* "Sorry Her Lot". This lyrical echo of "lot" is noteworthy, since lot is not a common word, and implies an obligatory, non-optional nature to women's lives. "Her lot in life" refers to what she is allotted, what position she is put in by outside forces, not what she chooses. This speaks powerfully to the way that women are entrapped by social constraints. Thus the first line of the song kicks off the appeal to sympathy, as well as the reminder of the unfair circumstances that she faces. Similarly, the last line of the recitative, in which she announces the general wish on behalf of woman to "make up for lost time" strikes a poignant note of identification, and speaks to a general (and equally futile) human desire to recapture youth, or at least remedy past oversights.

The song itself makes a powerful plea for recognition before it is too late, with "little will be left of me in the coming by and by" speaking to the inescapable fear of death—and attempting to force Bunthorne into a recognition of shared humanity and life's ephemerality. In fact, the primary appeal is something of a "carpe diem" motif, with Jane attempting not only to seize the day, but catch up for lost time. She starts in

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beautiful" (II, I, 26)) and then immediately turns around and translates it into perceived value: "We really know our worth, / the sun and I!" (II, I, 45-46). But I am getting ahead of myself! Back to *Patience*.

the recitative, warning to Bunthorne to act quickly for her charms are ripe. This cleverly reverses the usual carpe diem theme, evoking the rhetoric of "To His Coy Mistress," but this time the warning of decay is to the man, not the woman. Awkwardly for her, Jane seems blissfully unaware that her imminent decay is the exact reason that she is not as successful in her suit. She fixates on the reasoned case for her deserving the prize of Bunthorne, as if the wedding is the end, disregarding the inevitable marriage that will ensue. But this is what women are programmed to focus on--the getting, not the having. In her own way, reveals a blind spot of blissfully unaware naiveté, an area in which Patience herself seems to have a corner on the market. The backpedaling of the song's rhetoric, like the 1930's D'Oyly Carte change of "decaying" to "deteriorating" in the soliloquy before the song, actually detracts from the carpe-diem connection, and the shrinking back takes away the human reminders of shared frustration with mortality, thus accentuating the uncomfortable, embarrassment-inducing reminders of feminine objectifications (while life of all forms suffers decay, it is usually only objects, such as buildings, that deteriorate).

Jane's music, in this song and in general, is as unusual as her character itself. The delightful developed recitative before "Silver'd is the Raven Hair" starts out with Jane's frank self-evaluation, and is made more acutely biting by the insertion of earnest and determined cello scrapings. This is inevitably accompanied by physical comic business, provoking many laughs at the expense of the character (and actress). Sullivan is widely credited with inventing the back-and-forth play of this section, which makes it surprising that he decides to take a stand on the song that immediately follows it. The

dire, minor key warnings of the recit, "My charms are ripe, Reginald" (somewhat foreshadowing Katisha's prophetic tone in *Mikado*), fade into the much more sentimental major keyed "Silvered is the Raven Hair," which abruptly asserts itself as a rhythmically plodding, syrupy, woeful piece that seems out of character for the forthright, practical, audacious Jane that we have come to know. While Dunhill contends that this sudden turn around succeeds, since "The music, in treating (Gilbert's harsh words) so tenderly, softens the ugliness of the ideas and makes it possible to receive them without any sense of disgust" (93). While one wonders what possible "disgust" is avoided—disgust with Gilbert for mentioning Jane's physical flaws, or Jane for having them?--the success of this "softening" is dubious, and instead, Sullivan ends up calling attention to his own discomfort with frank discussion of women's bodies. This is one of the rare instances that the argument between the collaborators results in an audible divergence that could not be synthesized into something better than the respective differing opinions and aims. As Williamson asserts, "Sullivan's melody is placid and in complete contrast to the words: less distinguished musically, perhaps, than a good opportunity for the contralto to "do her stuff" in a serene and flowing legato style" (93). Perhaps this rare opportunity for musical display is something of an apology, on the part of the composer, for the indignity of the lyrics, but it nevertheless creates something of a jarring retreat.[38] And, like Ruth's collusion with the Pirate King in *Pirates of Penzance*, Jane's second act ensemble song with Bunthorne is comically

[38] As Hughes reminds us in "The Music of Arthur Sullivan," the composer was almost never concerned with creating "showpiece" numbers that allow singers to show off their skills: "Sullivan, while he was always glad to let unknown and inexperienced artist have a chance to make their name at the Savoy, did not go out of his way to write them parts that would enable them to do themselves justice. His main concern was not the singer, but the song" (93).

successful, but the musical associations with her character up to this point are subsumed by Bunthorne's more dominant style.

Beyond the appeal speaking to everyone's fear of death and irrelevance, though, much of Jane's address to the audience stands as a reminder of our collective mortality and rapidly approaching obsolescence. The direct and forthright address to the audience in dialogue transitions to the recitative with:

> When Time, grown weary of her heart-drawn sighs,
> Impatiently begins to dim her eyes
> Compelled, at last, in life's uncertain gloamings,
> To wreathe her wrinkled brow with well-saved 'combings'" (Act II, 12-15).

The juxtaposition of Jane's earthly, low comedic grasping attempt to stay relevant is all the more absurd when juxtaposed with the florid language of this imagery, from the personification of time to the characterization of "life's uncertain gloamings". But it is all fixated on the all too human focus on the approach of the unknown and "undiscovered" time of old age (which is rarely detailed, in politeness to the elderly) and death. The final couplet takes the humor in a different direction, with a well-timed pun on make-up: "Reduced, with rouge, lip-salve, and pearly grey, / To 'make up' for lost time as best she may!" (16-17). This unashamed confrontation of the intention of make-up, alongside Jane's revelation of her aims in pursuing Bunthorne and aestheticism, makes Jane unique among Gilbert and Sullivan women up to this point, in her candor and confrontation of her fears. Here there is none of Bunthorne's hypocrisy and attention-seeking behavior, instead Jane renders a frank admission of her fears and shortcomings. Perhaps this is why attempts to soft-pedal or shrink back from the forthrightness of this scene so greatly diminish its power, and why performance choices

that exaggerate and try to press the humorous aspect of Jane's character into this scene are similarly unsuccessful. Though Gilbert's parts allow some flexibility in interpretation, he was infamous for limiting exaggeration and banning crude physical humor for "cheap laughs," which would make this type of interpretation verboten during his lifetime (or the subsequent D'Oyly Carte productions that followed his staging religiously)[39]. As far as the text itself, though, the use of "she" and "her" instead of "me" and "my" further universalizes Jane's plight, and nudges toward a realization that we are all really Jane, in the end, and not Patience. Gilbert, far from "poking fun in a rather ungallant way at the waning attractions of ageing women" (Bradley *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan*, annotations, 318), makes Jane more human and more relatable by showing this vulnerable and unvarnished confrontation of approaching mortality and the diminishing use value that society assigns to the aging.

Jane's unshrinking self-criticism stands in stark relief to the entrance of the rest of the maidens, immediately after, with their typical exhibition of all that is shallow, unthinking, and literally and figuratively unreflecting, as they only absorb Grosvenor's "all consuming rays." While Wren insists that "it is up to Patience to save herself, and eventually she does" (106), citing a convoluted series of supposed choices that Patience makes to allow her to save face and end up with the man she chooses, I would contend that Patience merely falls into place with Grosvenor at the end, not through any action on her part, but in reaction to the changed initiated by the two leading men. Jane, on the

[39] The classic example of this is George Grossmith's old story of his attempt at physical comedy improvisation in *The Mikado*, related here: "Gilbert asked me if I would mind omitting that action on my part. I replied: 'Certainly, if you wish it; but I get an enormous laugh by it.' 'So you would if you sat on a pork-pie' replied he." (Goerge Grossmith, "A Society Clown", 116)

other hand, displays her decisiveness and sense of agency time and time again, not least of which when she insists that Bunthorne "tarry not," almost like she is scolding a reluctant child. Her unorthodox (and often indelicate) display of unabashed defiance of gender compliance is rewarded with the ultimate choice: between the object of her matrimonial focus throughout the opera and the avowed prize of the wealthy Duke. The verdict on Jane's philosophy of love is less clear, as it centers around loyalty and fidelity that is rewarded, with her successful winning of her dubious goal in the final scene (the now unpopular Bunthorne). However, this admirable commitment and faithfulness is ironically undermined by the fact that she drops him without a second glance when the "bigger matrimonial fish" of the Duke selects her. While this ending is refreshing in a way (Bunthorne hardly deserved such a faithful partner, much less one who he does not appreciate. This is a definite turn from the ending of *Pinafore*, in which Sir Joseph is punished for his audacity of trying to force a marriage with a much younger, and unwilling bride by being matched with the faithful hanger-on, Cousin Hebe—marriage as punishment is much more misogynistic, as well as not being a good predictor of marital happiness), it calls into question just what the true definition of love is, if it is not loyalty and fidelity. But this is not surprising, given Gilbert's frequent habit of downplaying the romance plot at the close of his operas time and time again (could add something here about the difficulty of successfully ending comedies), satisfying resolution of romance is not something that he seems able to, or at least interested in providing. So perhaps the closest thing to a lesson at the end of the opera is the fact that Jane's loyalty and resourcefulness is rewarded in the end, though she ends

up selling out on her principles in order to accept this matrimonial reward, making it a somewhat "hollow" win![40]

Iolanthe

The Fairy Queen in *Iolanthe* is an extension of the sympathetic, empathetic evocation of Lady Jane. The Fairy Queen, like the Lord Chancellor, is the embodiment of the law--in this case, the Fairy law that fairies cannot marry mortals. Both characters illuminate the fact that laws may be perfect in conception, but humans (and fairies) are vastly more complex and flawed than the law can encompass, and the implementation of law often ends up accomplishing the opposite of what was intended. Gilbert's Fairy Queen is reminiscent of Spenser's *Faerie Queen* as well, and, like Spenser's, alludes to the sitting Queen for the time in which it is written. 1970's MP Kenneth Baker wrote about this at length, drawing a direct correlation between Gilbert's queen and Queen Victoria, comparing Private Willis to John Brown, and the Lord Chancellor to Prime Minister Gladstone (as well as Strephon to Lord Randolph Churchill).[41] Actually, she functions more as a cross between Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth I. Her matronly stoutness and insistence on advising her subjects on domestic behavior is unmistakably reminiscent of Queen Victoria in her later years, but Gilbert's queen also garners much of her power from her refusal to participate in the royal marriage market--this allows her to circulate on her own terms, and not under the influence of a male counterpart,

[40] (note that the other characters are much more fickle, as Wren relates concerning Angela: "(her) real point of view is perfectly expressed in the song 'if Saphir I choose to Marry,' in which all five singers celebrate the irrelevance of who marries whom" (104). In fact, Gilbert's common refrain is that marriage and love have little to do with each other—Patience's story bears this out, with the truest experience of love being the de-sexualized "baby joy" that she and Grosvenor share as infants.

[41] As reported by Bradley, in *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!: The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan*. (181)

which makes her strikingly similar to Elizabeth I (who was also rather strict regarding the relationships of those in her court, incidentally).

Iolanthe's character herself makes a different statement, though. Instead of standing in as a representative of the law, she is emblematic of the struggle between obedience to the law and adherence to a personal sense of honor and meaningful self-sacrifice. Unlike the Fairy Queen and the Chancellor, she is not forced to choose between enforcing the law or pleasing their subordinates and/or themselves. Iolanthe, instead, is stuck between a figurative (and almost literal) rock and a hard place. She is given the choice of "all manner of pleasant places" for her banishment, and chooses to sacrifice her pleasure in order to devote herself to her son--though it is unclear how she can have the relationship that she seems to have with Strephon, if she is underwater. And in the end of the opera, she is effectively forced to choose between saving herself and letting and the punishment of death, in the form of revealing herself to her estranged husband, in order to save lives, or at least redeem the moral character, of Strephon, Phyllis, and the Lord Chancellor himself. The reunion between these two characters is one of the most affecting of the Savoy Operas, one of the few instances that the reunion of the two lovers in the final scene is not undermined by comic reversals or swallowed up by big chorus production numbers. Instead, it moves from comic (the Lord Chancellor nattering on about how he has wrestled with himself in order to win permission to marry his ward) to poignant (the surprisingly intimate "He Loves" aria) to sober and heartrending, in the long-awaited reunion of the divided lovers, which simultaneously condemns Iolanthe to her doom. Unlike the weak and silly

Phyllis, Iolanthe shows a strength of character and willingness to sacrifice herself for the good of others that is unique in this opera, and rare in any of the others as well.[42] Her un-ironic selflessness and adherence to her personal sense of what is ethical and virtuous, even when it means outright disobedience to the law, plays out as a demonstration of the inadequacy of law, and a condemnation of the inevitable failure of law to adapt and apply to changing times and situations. While many of the Savoy Operas point to the flaws in humans, who inevitably spoil things in spite of just laws, at least as many do the opposite, and point to just humans that are thwarted by flawed laws. And the character of Iolanthe, though not the lead role in terms of time on stage or number of lines, is undoubtedly the moral center of the opera, the character who forms the crux of the play in her bravery and integrity in a sea of corrupt, proudly inept politicians and feckless fairies. With the exception of the Lord Chancellor and the Fairy Queen, she is the only character who is fully fleshed out and not a mere caricature. Her character reveals that women are able to demonstrate personal integrity and maintain an ethical code even in the face of death and dishonor—the character whose sense of self-confidence and determination succeeds where the law--in the form of the Chancellor, who, after all, "embodies the law"--fails and would lead them astray.

The Fairy Queen positions herself as a deliberately "unsexed" woman. Like Lady Macbeth, and Ruth before her, part of her power is her refusal to use feminine wiles and calculated deployment of "feminine" submissiveness. She is, instead, bold and unflinching—an "influential fairy," not an influential woman. It is only when she

[42] Buttercup makes a similar revelation to save others at her own expense, but her life is not in danger. Also Buttercup's revelation is not life-endangering, and her "sin" is one of absurd ineptitude, while Iolanthe's confession is one of love, and motivated by her need to protect her son.

begins to weaken in her personal code of acting as an example for her subjects by eschewing relationships, that she starts to lose their confidence, and their belief in the justness of her laws suffers. In contrast to Iolanthe, the Fairy Queen makes a series of choices that are less personal, but in many ways more complex. She must weigh the happiness of her people with the importance of upholding the law, one that, it would seem, maintains order and balance within the fairy realm. Unlike the Lord Chancellor, she does not place her own happiness above that of her subordinates, or the law—in fact, she endeavors to lead by example, showing her fairy subjects that she, too, is vulnerable to the attractions of mortal man, and shows that mastering this impulse is worth the struggle. The Act II song "Oh, Foolish Fay," which is often played to great comic effect, is much more than another chance for the older, wiser authority figure to show that it is not just the young who are fools for love. The delightful bit of "topsy-turvydom" here is that a woman is instructing a group of women by objectifying a man in the most blatant way—they speak of him as if he is not even present, and she unabashedly admits to admiring him solely due to his "physical attributes" which are "simply godlike" (II, I, 168). She further generalizes that all of the women are also swayed by beauty only, by comparing herself to them as such: "Do you suppose that I am insensible to the effect of manly beauty?" (II, I,160-161). This opportunity for women to take the subject position in the ogling gaze, shows that they can be just as shallow and insultingly condescending to men as they typically are to women (the Lord Chancellor, in many ways the Fairy Queen's mirror in the play, shows the characteristic

treatment of women as objects in his opening song, in which he passes out women as if they are playing cards, "one for you" etc.).

Another relevant aspect of this play, with regards to gender norms, is the positioning of the major characters, including the Fairy Queen, Chancellor, Iolanthe, and Strephon, in relation to "natural" law or natural inclination. The Fairy Queen strives against it in order to maintain order and liberty/ innocence for fairies. Chancellor also tries to fight it, not successfully. Strephon positions himself as on the side of nature, in fact, calls on nature as his main witness. All use nature for their own often selfish purposes, though. Iolanthe alone defies what is set down as "natural", and engages with nature much differently. The Fairy Queen's attitude toward nature is a calculated effort to enforce a sort of pre-lapsarian innocence, reminiscent of some of the wildly optimistic efforts of Romanticism earlier in the century. She characterizes of Iolanthe's relationship with the Lord Chancellor as "Dark sin against our fairy laws" echoing William Blake's dire prophecies about women who indulge in sexuality, in poems such as *Songs of Experience's* "Sick Rose."[43] This endeavor to maintain sexual innocence, with nature functioning as the method of education and fulfillment for the young fairies, also owes more than a little to Rousseau's training of Emile. This enforcement of child-like innocence makes Iolanthe's bold choices even more dramatic, and highlights her devotion as a mother, as she makes the ultimate sacrifice for her child and husband by revealing herself.

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[43] (the invisible worm) Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

Musically, *Iolanthe* is a strong offering for the low-voiced women's parts. The Fairy Queen gets music that is very illustrative of her character, as a confident figure who is secure in her place as ruler. The Act II solo, "Oh Foolish Fay," is rather static musically, and in terms of plot movement, but it develops character beautifully, giving the queen a chance to display her vulnerable side, while still maintaining her characteristic majestic musical lines, and complementary air of self-assured confidence. The "Captain Shaw" line of the song, which Dunhill praises as a 'perfectly rising melody," is an excellent example of the musical characterization in this song. Dunhill goes on to call it "one of the most intensely serious comic songs ever composed" (107). Indeed, the comic juxtaposition of the Fairy Queen's absolute seriousness and the innate absurdity of her assertions are not unique to her, this contradiction is arguably the bedrock gag on which all of the Savoy Operas are based, but it does come off rather well in this instance. As far as character revelation goes, it is something of a mirror of The Lord Chancellor's "Nightmare song," with less tongue-twisting acrobatics. Iolanthe herself has even more musical depth and range, though. Her character bears the honor of the most distinctive character-illustrating leitmotif, in this most Wagnerian of Sullivan scores.[44] The haunting invocation first appears in the midst of the tonally de-centered space created by the Fairy Queen's rare reversal of a royal decree, and is used to suggest her character beautifully at various times throughout the piece. It is unique in its unironically serious tone, as well. Williamson concurs, asserting that Iolanthe's

[44] Wren: (regarding the leitmotif introducing Iolanthe) "In earlier operas this might be written off as a coincidence or at best a subconscious echo. *Iolanthe*, however, is the opera in which Sullivan most regularly uses Wagnerian leitmotif as a compositional tool--. . . his repeated use of such devices shows him to be alive to the extent to which musical echo can evoke and enhance nonmusical ideas and emotions" (130).

musical depth and seriousness is actually sustained throughout the opera: "The haunting tenderness of the Invocation to Iolanthe, and her own wistful motif, deepen the poignancy in the choral writing after Iolanthe's vain plea to the Lord Chancellor. Sullivan, although capable of pathos, lacked emotional depth, but in this wailing cry of lament on two sets of three notes, descending at semitone intervals—E, D sharp, D natural, C sharp, C natural—he came, perhaps, as near as he ever did to suggesting the tragic in atmosphere" (116). While I would hesitate to make such a limiting assessment of Sullivan's emotive range, the characterization of Iolanthe's music, and its uniqueness in the G&S canon, is incontrovertible.[45]

This opera really starts to show the innovations that Gilbert and Sullivan make to the low-voiced "dame" model. The two romantic leads display little growth or independence of character, instead carrying the comic burden of pointing out the absurdity of the social norms. Phyllis is no more than a caricature of feminine caprice, hollow and flighty in her indifference regarding which of her two suitors she is accepting, and standing in stark contrast to both the Fairy Queen and Iolanthe.[46] Iolanthe, like Buttercup, keeps a secret that she thinks is best to keep hidden, for the

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[45] Dunhill notes Iolanthe's musical uniqueness as well, pointing out that "When Iolanthe pleads with him (Lord Chancellor) for her son (in a ballad which is one of the richest melodic treasures of the score) . . . All drolleries are suddenly set aside and the scene actually calls for the display of real human pathos. The situation, which might so easily appear incongruous and out of tune with the rest of the work, is absolutely saved by the beauty and sincerity of Sullivan's music. It is. Strange to say, the only dramatic episode in any of the Savoy operas which is treated with convincing intensity, and were it not for its existence one might have doubted the capacity of the composer to rise to the heights demanded" (109).

[46] And yet, she is able to see clearly enough to critique Strephon's overly idealized view of marriage

Strephon: Today we are to be made happy forever.
Phyllis: Well, we're to be married.
Strephon: It's the same thing.
Phyllis: I suppose it is." (I, I, 205-209).

sake of her son as well as herself. But each reveals themselves when pressed to do the right thing. This shows willingness to assert oneself against custom, even, in Iolanthe's case, in the face of what she believes to be certain death. Ultimately, there are three characters in the play undergo significant character development and growth, and none of them are young lovers. Instead, it is the Fairy queen, Iolanthe, and the Lord Chancellor who make the difficult decisions, and learn more about themselves as a result of the struggles that the face in the action of the opera. Far from presenting the Fairy Queen unkindly, Gilbert gives her a chance to explore her sexuality and human-like flaws and impulses, without making her the object of contempt or disapproval. Instead, it is presented as a positive and ultimately just decision when she alters the fairy stricture against fairy intermarriage, submitting to her "natural" desires, and at the same time showing mercy toward her subjects. Iolanthe follows her already developing impulse toward rebellious self-sacrifice--defying the Fairy Queen's intention to allow her a pleasant exile in order to devote herself to Strephon, for example—and grows into a persuasive and mature rebel-with-a-conscience. Her redemptive love for her son and wayward husband drives the plot of the end of the opera as well, resulting in the romantic and sexual emancipation of the fairy kingdom. Also, this privileges of the positive drive of emotion taking precedence over the rational and measured nature of upholding the law (which is at its height in Iolanthe's evocative "He Loves"). Finally, the Lord Chancellor, grows from an emotionally stunted embodiment of the law to a man who has his long lost love restored, and as a result not only appears cured from his

"highly susceptible" ways, but conceives the idea of circumventing fairy law in order to achieve the best possible outcome for all involved.

The Mikado

The Mikado, like most of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas set outside of England, bills itself as a window for those curious about the other, but in fact, is revealed to be a mirror instead—Pooh Bah is a prime example of this, as a nobleman who is humorously conflicted between his self-importance and his mercenary grasping at money to fund his fading lifestyle. As the 1885 anonymous review from *Monthly Musical Record*) said of *Mikado* at the time, "Though nominally Japanese, the allusions are more or less thinly veiled sarcastic references to our native institutions and peculiarities" (103). Modern critic Carolyn WIlliams further elaborates on this: "*The Mikado* presents an autoethnographic project, through which English culture is defamiliarized, yet remains familiar a fantasy culture where genteel respectability is so important that one could be executed for flirting, where bureaucracy's various departments have proliferated to the point of absurdity (257). And as Edith Hamilton argues in "A Victorian Aristophanes," Gilbert's portrait of the Mikado himself, and the attitude of the characters involved, allows him to criticize patriotism broadly, applying more directly to English habits than any other.[47] In spite of the hidden critique of English culture, the assumptions that ground the opera are still grossly orientalist, as Jo Lee aptly chronicles in her book, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado.* Nevertheless, the character of Katisha, like Jane in *Patience*, is one of the few who demonstrates self-

[47] From *W.S. Gilbert: A Century of Scholarship and Commentary*, ed. Jones, (106)

awareness and consciousness of her own limitations. None of the men in *Mikado* are given this kind of awareness. In spite of this, Gilbert is criticized by many of his contemporaries for his characterization of her, including Sullivan himself. Acknowledging flaws or imperfections for some reason upset Victorians—especially Victorian men. It is unclear whether it is the self-awareness on the part of the unlovely, or Gilbert's acknowledgement of some sort of innate unattractiveness, drawing aside the veil of politeness that obscures the harsh truth of valuing of women based on appearance. Why is it cruel to show an unattractive woman, who admits her defeat in the realm of beauty, but is confident in her value in other respects? Her self-awareness and embrace of her violent nature are key factors in her suitability for a match with KoKo, one of the most ingenious and ultimately fortuitous matches in the G&S canon. They actually get along, and are more compatible, than Nanki and Yum, and Katisha puts herself in danger by marrying KoKo, which Yum is unwilling to do. In addition to this, Katisha is confident in her own worth, even if her self-assessment is not reflected back to her by the other characters. The complexity of her character is amplified when she manages to transform from harsh and demanding to surprisingly sympathetic, in her act two reversal. And at least she is honest unflinching about her qualities, shunning all attempts to—hide her flaws, from her perceived unattractiveness to her unseemly bloodthirst. Her attraction to the "dark side" is actually one of the aspects of her character that makes her more human—perhaps because it gives her more than a little in common with her creator.

Katisha is unlike anyone else in the opera, which is evident as soon as she appears onstage. In looking for pictures of Katisha with other cast members, she is immediately recognizable, because of her rigid, bold carriage of herself, as opposed to the accommodating, bowing and coyly demure three little maids. Her proud, unflinching comportment announces her self-confidence to those she meets, and she follows it up with her behavior, confirming that she is forthcoming and brazen about who she is and what she believes. Her costume is a large part of what sets her apart, in its ornate stiffness, and use of older, traditional fashion, indicating an effort to associate her with ancestral respect and authority. (Below are early Katishas: Rosina Brandram as the first Katisha in 1885, Elise Cameron in the concurrent American production from D'Oyly Carte, also 1885, and Mrs. Hanford from an 1899 Torquay Operatic Society (amateur) production, and a sketch from the 1885 program from the Savoy. For comparison, the last two images are also from the 1885 premiere, with Sybil Grey as Peep-Bo, Leonora Braham as Yum-Yum and Jessie Bond as Pitti Sing.)

THE "THREE LITTLE MAIDS FROM SCHOOL"
("THE MIKADO").

In addition to the poised, firm carriage and unflinching gaze, which announces her as a force to be reckoned with, her use of her fan (in the first picture, held high in an almost threatening way, in the sketch, worn across her body and tucked into her strap) is more as a sword to be deployed at will than the objects that obscure the demure little maids from view. Katisha is unflinching in meeting the gaze—like Jane, she does not conceal or insinuate, she confronts people and things head on, even if they attack her character and lack of traditional beauty. This is also indicative of the critique of underhanded

concealment with regards to courtship rituals, which appears in multiple Gilbert and Sullivan shows: Yum Yum is actually the duplicitous one, she wants to "train" Nanki-Poo just as much as Katisha does, and the demure trick of hiding behind the fan actually is more concealing of intentions than Katisha's forthright, unabashed announcement of her plans. It is also noteworthy that, while all of the costumes were noted for their painstaking construction using "authentic" imported materials, Katisha's was the only one that was actually a 200-year-old garment from Japan (a fact that was widely publicized at the time, making her uniqueness apparent even before the curtain rises). Thus her character takes on a sort of ancestral authority that is usually associated with more patrician figures.

Katisha's archness and undaunted self-display are only one of the aspects attesting to one of her most exceptional and admirable qualities, her indomitable strength. Steadman addresses this in her work on Gilbert's "Dame" characters, where she argues against the assumption that the writer is cruelly exposing Katisha, though, like the standard expected from this character type, she does "long for youthful love and (is) robustly revengeful when slighted" (230). In fact, though, her characterization ends up being a testament to her humanity: "She is tough, resilient, a little bloodthirsty, and knows she is plain. Like pantomime dames she attempts to separate young lovers, but she is so forceful in her own right that her romance is more interesting than theirs" (230). I would agree with this assessment, in fact, much of her strength lies in her willingness to go against what is expected of her. She comes across as something of a cross between a Geisha and a Warrior. Her posture is very similar to the stiff, martial,

commanding presence of a warrior (see images). Also, her line in the "Daughter-in-Law Elect" song attests to her extraordinary strength and confidence, as she announces that she alone is not governed by the Mikado, but instead, is: "As tough as a bone, / With a will of her own" (II, i, 315-316). And while she may be guilty of underhandedly objectifying Yum Yum in "Beware, Pink Cheeks, Bright Eyes," she turns around and objectifies herself in Act II. This later scene reveals a self-professed talent at studied, practiced self-exhibition and awareness of herself as an object of scrutiny that is quite reminiscent of the Geisha tradition, as she announces that her right elbow is "on view Tuesdays and Fridays, on presentation of visiting card" (II, 486-487). Also the way she speaks of training Nanki-poo provokes one to wonder if he is her apprentice or her beloved—she laments "I am an acquired taste—only the educated palate can appreciate me. I was educating his palate when he left me. Well, he is dead, and where shall I find another? It takes years to train a man to love me" (687-690). Katisha's unflinching self-assessment, poise, warrior-like strength, and demand for recognition and respect make her undeniably unfeminine and unique, but also paint her as arrogant and unsympathetic—indeed, her public demeanor indicates that she would rebuff any attempt at sympathy; but it is precisely this prickly, indomitable nature that makes the private reveal of her human, vulnerable side even more effective. Modern performance practice makes Katisha the most likely of all of the Savoy "dame" roles to be cast as a man, which is rather revealing. Of course, Gilbert would never create a drag role (as per the rules he insists on with Sullivan at the beginning of their partnership) but the fact that Katisha is reminiscent of such is a nod to the transgressive violation of gender

norms present in her character. Instead of taking the "easy" comic appeal of making her a drag role, Katisha as she is demands more serious consideration. Also, Katisha hardly comes off pathetic in the end—in fact, her relationship with KoKo seems more likely to be a successful companionate marriage than that of the romantic "leads."

When Katisha appears in her late, sweeping entrance, it is evident that she is unlike any other character. She has an otherworldly, towering presence right from the start, speaking more like an ominous oracle than a woman scorned, seeking revenge. She does not threaten violence or sabotage, but instead predicts doom for Yum-Yum (or what we can only assume is Yum Yum, since she never names her):

> Pink cheek, that rulest
> Where wisdom serves!
> Bright eye, that foolest
> Heroic nerves!
> Rose lip, that scornest
> Lore-laden years!
> Smooth tongue, that warnest
> Who rightly hears!
> Thy doom is nigh,
> Pink cheek, bright eye!
> Thy knell is rung,
> Rose lip, smooth tongue! (766-777)

She attempts to let weight to her pronouncements by making them seem inexorable—not based in opinion, or even direct threats.[48] The particular features that she singles out also create a harsh indictment, of gender norms at the time, in particular. Wisdom is subservient to fleeting and arbitrary beauty, in the form of "pink cheeks". It is unclear if

[48] The syntax and import compare strikingly with this pronouncement from Gluck's *Orfeo*, spoken by the authoritative character of Amor: Forbidden is the sight of Eurydice / Until you are beyond the caves of the Styx! / And of this great prohibition you must not tell her! (Act I scene 2)

Katisha sees herself as representing "wisdom" in this situation, but it would not be out of character for her. In singling out Yum's features, she objectifies her and exercises a sort of male-gaze on her—creating an "othering" effect and exaggerating her "femininity." Her decrees are also reminiscent of a witch reciting an incantation, with the specific citing of particular parts of Yum-Yum's anatomy attempting to weave a spell on her. The chorus is fully aware of the power of her statement, as well: "If true her tale, thy knell is rung, / Pink cheek, bright eye, rose lip, smooth tongue!" (778-779). Katisha's lack of first person pronoun (beyond "my", pronouncing ownership) belies her confidence and sense of entitlement. Her clear command of the situation and confidence in the truth of her pronouncements bring her into focus as a force of nature more than a flesh and blood woman. Her appearance is a contrast to the rest of the cast as well—her dress is more deliberately formal, drawing on all of the power of ancestral respect, tradition, and rule. This commanding, seemingly unquestionable presence is unique within the play (and largely unheard of in the other operas as well). Pooh-Bah, who has a similarly arrogant and overly self-congratulating air, is the object of ridicule for his hypocrisy, while Katisha is, at least in Act I, almost never portrayed comically (that will come in Act II, with the "Daughter-in-law elect" business).

Early in Act II Katisha appears in a different role, that of "Daughter-in-law Elect." This song presents a critique of monarchical power, and a danger inherent in the way that Katisha seems to hold power over the Mikado, in an almost threatening way, foreshadowing Scaphio and Phantis, who rule over the King in *Utopia LTD*. In this way, her power over the ruler is another glimpse of the flaws in a monarchical structure,

in which people who are not the "divinely chosen" can end up gaining power over the rightful ruler, and wreak havoc. Following this song, she asserts her supremely confident, unorthodox understanding of her self-worth, and rejection of traditional paradigms of feminine beauty, in an interchange with Pooh-Bah:

> POOH. I am surprised that he should have fled from one so lovely!
> KAT. That's not true.
> POOH. No!
> KAT. You hold that I am not beautiful because my face is plain. But you know nothing; you are still unenlightened. Learn, then, that it is not in the face alone that beauty is to be sought. My face is unattractive!
> POOH. It is.
> KAT. But I have a left shoulder-blade that is a miracle of loveliness. People come miles to see it. My right elbow has a fascination that few can resist.
> POOH. Allow me!
> KAT. It is on view Tuesdays and Fridays, on presentation of visiting card. As for my circulation, it is the largest in the world. (II, I, 475-487)

From this we can tell that she is not concerned about her lack of a "beautiful face" but that she estimates her value based on the more extreme objectification of her minor body parts. This scene point to the ridiculousness of standards of female beauty, and associating value with appearance. And like Yum-Yum, Katisha "knows her worth." It is uncomfortable for some of the audience though, especially men, because there is such a disconnect—she is inappropriately proud of her object beauty, and thus embarrassingly out of joint. However, since she has thus far been so unforgiving and unabashed about putting herself forward, we cannot feel sympathy for her. This is about to change.

In his analysis of *Mikado*, Wren appraises the lack of human depth in the characters, which he sees as singling it out from other operas: "The emotional range of

The Mikado is much narrower than that of *Iolanthe* or *Princess Ida*. . . . From beginning to end, the audience is distanced from any real sympathy for the characters and their situations, and invited to laugh at even their grimmest plights" (164). For most of *The Mikado*, this statement undoubtedly applies to Katisha as well as anyone else. Her entrance in the Act I finale introduces her as a hostile antagonist, coming across as not quite human, with her prophetic, oracular pronouncements of doom. She is invulnerable, and doesn't need our pity or sympathy. When she enters with the Mikado again in Act II, she pompously commands recognition and admiration; her over-zealous assertion of herself above the Mikado makes her one of the most absurd and disagreeable characters in all of the Savoy operas—like the "sisters, cousins, and aunts" from *H.M.S. Pinafore* taken to the extreme. Finally, she comes back after Nanki-Poo's supposed death, with an introspective soliloquy/song, delivered to no audience but herself. The comparison could not be more stark. Once again, Gilbert utilizes the element of surprise, and, like the unanticipated realization that the town of Titipu is more a spoof of English government and society than a critique of Japan, the shocking revelation of Katisha as vulnerable, sensitive, and despairing, is such an abrupt reversal, which is exactly what makes her third incarnation, as grieving, devastated lover, so jarring and unexpectedly powerful.

Katisha's music is remarkable, partly because it allows her to expand her emotional range with bold and unexpected musical depth. Part of the uniqueness of her musical personality is due to the fact that, like the music of Lady Jane before her, it is the result of Sullivan's expression of his customary squeamishness about making her

another unloved older woman character, made fun of even by herself[49]. The resulting music makes Katisha's role stand out, as she reveals her genuine heartbreak late in the second act, as the only remotely sympathetic character in the entire piece, among a cast of lively but hollow caricatures. In its melancholy meditativeness, "Hearts do not Break" bears a passing resemblance to Sullivan's famous, decidedly non-comic ballad, "The Lost Chord." The music that Sullivan writes for Katisha's song is a rather considerable gift to the poor beleaguered alto singing the role (usually Rosina Brandham, in his time); the lovely, haunting minor-key melody and un-restrictedly flowing phrases allow for a display of defenselessness and surprising poignancy from this seemingly invincible character. The freedom of time-stretching rubato at the opening of the song allows a wide range of dramatic play for the singer of the role, which can turn the mood bizarrely comic or deepen in intensity, depending on the choices of the interpreter. The tempo and attitude of the singer on the slurred line repeated at the end, "May not a cheated maiden die," is particularly key in this element of mood choice—when played as over-the-top and melodramatic, it will lose its poignancy entirely. Wren acknowledges the unique nature of Katisha's music, stating

[49] In fact, in the operas to follow, Sullivan drew a very definite line in the sand on this point. His letter to Gilbert, regarding the character of Lady Sophy in *Utopia, Limited*, lays out his reservations quite plainly: "If there is to be an old or middle aged woman at all in the piece, is it necessary that she should be very old, ugly, raddled, and perhaps grotesque, and still more is it necessary that she should be seething with love and passion (requited or unrequited) and other feelings not usually associated with old age? I thought that 'Katisha' was to be the last example of that type—(a type which however carefully drawn can never be popular with the public, as experience has taught me)" (Pearson, 171-172). It is Sullivan who seems like the stuffy and insensitive one, though his distaste is under a cover of chivalry (yes, for god's sake, protect them from view, so we don't have to see the hideous spectacle of an unattractive or middle aged women in love.) I can't help but ask: What is so horrifying to you, Sullivan, her age and declining looks, or her love-sickness? Why does that creep you out? It has long been a trope for aging men to have unequal, ridiculous attachments to younger women, which end up being thwarted. Why can't it be funny for an older, more confident and established woman to be blindly attached to a younger man?

that "The songs are also remarkably similar in mood. . . Except for Katisha's two solos and perhaps "Titwilliow," every song has the sole purpose of being funny" (164). But where other critics see this crack in the expressive (or, rather, pointedly non-expressive) texture of the opera as a welcome opportunity to humanize the seemingly invulnerable "dragon-lady," Wren diagnoses this as a weakness in the piece as a whole: "The greatest 'wrong note' in *The Mikado* lies in the character of Katisha. Her two solos . . . were probably written to reflect Sullivan's growing distaste for Gilbert's stock "repulsive old lady" character, . . . but in an opera otherwise dedicated to artificiality, real sentiment does not fit in" (169). Hughes, on the other hand, goes so far as to includes Katisha's "Hearts do not break" in his list of songs that "give a competent executant plenty of opportunity for expressive vocalization in a suitable register" (81), an honor he only grants to five songs in the repertory. And while Dunhill goes out of his way to characterize Yum-Yum's soprano arias and the women's chorus music as "delicate" over and over, he gives Katisha's music a less trite assessment: "Katisha's sudden appearance presents a vivid stage picture, and the music here is suitably theatrical, if in a rather conventional way. Her song, however, has a striking initial phrase, and is an extremely well-devised example of sustained agitation" (133).

Wren attests that *Mikado* is a break from the pattern of sympathetic protagonists, moving toward a purely comic vein: "In a serious song the audience's response is intended to be empathetic, mirroring the character's emotions—Mabel weeps, and the audience weeps with her. A comic song, however, invites the audience to have a different response from the character's—KoKo weeps, and the audience laughs.

Emotionally distanced from the character, they can witness his fear, doubt, sorrow, anguish, or despair without themselves sharing those emotions" (165). This bears out for other reasons as well. We laugh at KoKo's fear and anguish because he is an old man who places himself in a ridiculous position by planning to marry his ward. He has power over her, and uses it for his own benefit, which makes him contemptible. His position of absurd power and vulnerability makes his character complex, but since we know him as the "Lord High Executioner" who is marrying Yum Yum against her will, we have already gotten to know him as an antagonist and blocking character. Katisha is also a blocking character, but by Act II, she grows beyond this limiting plot mechanism. When she loses everything at Nanki-Poo's supposed death, she ceases all maneuverings which selfishly impact others, and instead opens herself up to her own self-assessment, revealing immediately recognizable human despair, as she tries and fails to piece back together her life without him. These songs are crucial to the character, and to the relationship between Katisha and Ko-Ko, which ends up being the most human, affecting connection of the opera. Instead of feeling like they have been "dropped in,"[50] they are an important shift in tone, which culminates in the scene with KoKo. In "Tit-Willow," Ko-Ko reveals his own vulnerable, human side, which would just seem awkward without the glimpse into Katisha's depths of despair, and the connection this introspective interlude allows into her emotional state. Their union actually makes sense at this point, and is made stronger by their acceptance of each other as they are, and their shared love of violence. Katisha's solo allows a glimpse of this depth of character:

[50] Wren: "In their own right they're fine songs. In context, however, they feel as if they'd been dropped in from another show." (169)

Hearts do not break!
They sting and ache
For old love's sake,
        But do not die,
Though with each breath
They long for death
As witnesseth
        The living I!
        Oh, living I!
        Come, tell me why,
When hope is gone,
Dost thou stay on?
        Why linger here,
        Where all is drear?
        Oh, living I!
        Come, tell me why,
When hope is gone,
Dost thou stay on?
        May not a cheated maiden die? (II, i)

There is a discomfiting disconnect apparent between her physical, sentient self and her heart/soul, since she needs to have a dialogue with it in order to decide what she is feeling. Also, Gilbert's stogy assumptions that fulfillment for women is innately tied to successful attainment of heterosexual marriage are on full display at this moment. Nevertheless, her desolation and despair is sincere. She truly regrets the loss of Nanki, and not because it will almost certainly result in her loss of status, but because he has represented "hope" and "love" for her, without which "all is drear." The woman who seemed to only value power and the fame of her oddly objectified beauty now reveals herself, in a moment of isolated self-reflection, to be lost without love.

This glimpse into her inner-monologue surprisingly reveals her as vulnerable, nearly suicidal, and undeniably human. This weakens her façade of towering strength,

but is absolutely necessary to the resolution of the plot; without this song, creating a exposed and relatable side of Katisha, the ensuing scene with Ko-Ko would not be nearly as engaging and satisfying. Their "pairing off" is, in fact, one of the most satisfying of the cannon. Usually in the Savoy operas, when the obstacles to a couple's union are finally removed, they are not given a scene of fulfillment to cement the bond between them, and allow the audience a celebratory sigh of contentment. It's just not funny. And the interaction between them, in which Ko-Ko at first unwillingly seduces Katisha, allows even more of her hidden virtue to shine through. Ko-Ko's song plays on her hidden inclination to self-sacrifice:

> Now I feel just as sure as I'm sure that my name
> Isn't Willow, titwillow, titwillow,
> That 'twas blighted affection that made him exclaim,
> 'Oh, willow, titwillow, titwillow!'
> And if you remain callous and obdurate, I
> Shall perish as he did, and you will know why,
> Though I probably shall not exclaim as I die,
> 'Oh, willow, titwillow, titwillow! (II, I, 730-739)

Katisha is able to turn the tables on herself, so to speak—in her relationship with Nanki, he was the callous and obdurate one, so she is able to see things from the other side now, and act as she wishes he had, to save a fellow creature from suffering.

But for Katisha and Ko-Ko, we not only get to be privy to their initial wooing scene--which we almost never get to see, beyond *Yeoman*--we also get "There is Beauty in the Bellow of a Blast," an absolutely delightful cementing of their relationship, in they demonstrate that they are actually very much in synch, and have a great deal in common, as well as agreeing to accept each other's flaws and foibles, creating a fairly

admirable relationship model! They are certainly more worth imitating than Yum-Yum's depth of commitment to Nanki-Poo, since she deserts him at the first sign of personal danger, contrasting with Katisha, who contemplates sacrificing herself without the object of her love, and risks punishment from the Mikado when she marries Ko-Ko. The song in which Katisha and Ko-Ko cement their relationship exposes the two of them as an ideal match, as dangerous as they are tolerant and understanding of each other's violent tendencies:

KAT Volcanoes have a splendour that is grim,
And earthquakes only terrify the dolts,
But to him who's scientific
There is nothing that's terrific
In the falling of a flight of thunderbolts!
KO. Yes, in spite of all my meekness,
If I have a little weakness,
It's a passion fora flight of thunderbolts! (II, i 767-774)

His meekness is seen as unmasculine, her strength is seen as unfeminine. Together they are perfect in their equal disregard for gender constructs. Katisha's warrior-like nature returns here, as Jefferson emphasizes in this comparison: "'There is Beauty in the Bellow of the Blast' conjures up the warlike images of Japanese figurative art—'the tiger a-lashing of his tail and the flight of thunderbolts" (189). While Jefferson asserts that Ko-Ko undermines this part of Katisha's nature, I would say that he defuses this aspect of her character by confronting and accepting it. Katisha is no longer a threat to peace, since her bloodthirst is acknowledged, even celebrated, by her partner, instead of being repressed, and therefore dangerous. The prominence of this song, which is also featured in the overture gives further weight to Katisha's character.

In the end, *Mikado* bears an interesting resemblance to *Iolanthe*, where "characters such as the Lord Chancellor and the Fairy Queen are sincerely torn between a law they respect and their personal sense of what is right" (Wren, 170). Wren elaborates on this, stating that "The question in *Mikado* is not whether to obey the law but how to get away with not obeying it" (170.) If this is true, Katisha is an incarnation of the law that people are trying to avoid. The laws are so harsh that "the only reason to obey them is fear of the awful punishment, and normal living requires finding ways to disobey them" (170). So, in the end *The Mikado* acts as a faux-exotic exterior hiding a surprise mirror of the time and place in which Gilbert writes, one that critiques harsh laws, upper class hypocrisy, and blind patriotism. Katisha herself is something of a surprise mirror as well, as it turns out. She starts as a forbidding "dragon lady," but becomes a relatable figure in her loss and sensitivity to Ko-Ko's pleas. Is it orientalism? Yes. It may be an exaggerated, ironic sort of orientalism that attempts to turn the tables on the viewing public, and actually make them look at themselves more closely, but it ends up being no less insidious. It still involved elaborate insistence on "authenticity" (like bringing in women from the knightsbridge installation, and calling the woman "miss six-pence please.") Just as *Patience* was an ironic version of aestheticism, but nevertheless increased the mania for it, and became instrumental in Oscar Wilde's career and popularity, *Mikado* attempted to reveal something about English character through a surface comparison to an imaginary Japanese village, and ended up amplifying the mania for japonaiserie and cultural appropriation.

The prominent low-voice women in the operas as a whole are difficult to encapsulate in an over-arching comparison. Jane, while she takes a similar air of superiority in schooling the lovesick maidens and the Dragoons to that of Dame Carruthers in *Yeoman of the Guard* (when she preaches the glories of tower justice to Phoebe) offers her assertions regarding the correct nature of aesthetic edicts in the spirit of helpfulness. She attempts to assist the dragoons in their quest for the maidens, and the maidens in their mastery of the techniques (however misguided) of aestheticism. She does not demand obedience to the law in the face of innocent suffering. And, like Katisha, she is revealed to have a softer, sympathetic, human side in Act II. It is surprising that there were not as many objections to Gilbert's "cruelty" to her; the reason may lie in the ameliorating "softer side" that is expressed for both. The seemingly tough exterior, the outer shell of indomitable strength that both Jane and Katisha exhibit is shown to be a front for their human vulnerabilities later. But in revealing these vulnerabilities, Gilbert shows the carefully hidden flaws that they are trying to compensate for, and, at least for Jane, this entails an awareness of her waning physical attractiveness. While this makes her more human, it also acknowledges an unfairness about women's roles and socially accepted use value that Sullivan, and the rest of Victorian patriarchal society, would rather keep hidden.

It is certain, though, that Gilbert himself was not out to crusade against gender inequality, though many of his operas end up working to that end. As G. K Chesterton famously asserts in his assessment of Gilbert and Sullivan, "The typical satire of this period remained what Gilbert himself loved to preserve it, an airy, artistic, detached and

almost dehumanized thing; not unallied to the contemporary cult of art for art's sake. Gilbert was fighting against a hundred follies and illogicalities; but he was not fighting for anything, and his age as a whole was no longer certain for what it was fighting" (Jones, 204). This blanket characterization of Gilbert's "age" is misguided, but the intimation that Gilbert does not orient his satire around any particular cause rings true. Hibbard, on the other hand, makes the case that Gilbert is "totally uninterested in politics," and furthermore, that "his satirical attacks on Victorian society were not, therefore directed against its respected institutions, which he would not have cared to see replaced or even, in most cases, reformed, but against those human beings—complacent, foolish, misguided, irritating, mealy-mouthed—whom he saw with exasperation on every side" (139-140) I disagree, in fact all of what seemed like attacks on individuals were instead attacks on general hypocrisy and social backwardness/cant. Take Major Gen Stanley, Sir Joseph, or even Bunthorne. In the end, Gilbert did not take on a cause or heartlessly lash out at people at will, but instead, made a well-intentioned, humorous assessment of his age, and with a mostly benevolent, but appraising eye, made gentle rebukes of what he found wanting, in what Steadman chronicles as his "lifelong preoccupation with the true versus the false" (213). Regarding the female characters in particular, she further attests: "Characteristically, Gilbert used the dame to satirize, not the middle-aged follies which his contemporaries conventionally ridiculed, but the premium which Victorians placed on youthful beauty as the most desirable personal quality in marriage. Ruth, Lady Jane, and Katisha all point out that they are superior to the rose lips and bright eyes of 17 year olds in everything except

appearance" (231). The Victorian obsession with youth, beauty, and socially acceptable feminine accomplishment are all most decidedly grist for Gilbert's satirical mill, but there is more than a humorous condemnation of skin-deep beauty at work here. Gilbert's work in creating these unpredictable (and uncharacteristic) living, breathing portraits of women outside the constraints of social norms breaks new ground in revealing the reality of life for women of various ages beyond the all-consuming "marriage market." Though Gilbert himself is the unabashed diva of his company, his penchant for putting himself into his strong-but-flawed female characters, coupled with the irresistible attraction to exposing the widespread social hypocrisy of gender norms that was (and is) taken for granted by society at large, result in some of the most striking portraits of defiantly strong, nonconforming women of his time.

Conclusion

It is tempting to assign extra-ordinary powers to music—after all, more than other forms of artistic communication, it is such a fluid, seemingly open art form. Sullivan's address (quoted in the introduction), after all, attests to music's incorruptible purity, with the ability work as an unimpeachable "elevating and ennobling force". The aspect of "folk" music to bind and promote a sense of national pride was also a major circulating force at the time. And this connects to the demands made on the "nightingale" divas of the time, as well; as Gillen D'Arcy Wood attests, while he conveys Hans Christian Andersen's reminiscences in his autobiography: "Jenny Lind's effect 'had been to restore the 'truth and nature' of national folk song tradition to an international bel Canto style long corrupted by virtuosic excess" (215). While these patriotic (jinjoistic?) claims on the behalf of music have not disappeared today, it is unlikely that anyone now would make the kind of avowals of incorruptibility that Sullivan does, though we have our own assumptions about what music can and cannot do. These range from making unborn babies magically smarter, to working as a powerful torture device, and even to healing sickness and various brain disorders.[51] Some of these modern claims about music's powers have been questioned, and I am not here to defend them, by any means, but they raise an interesting thought: perhaps, more than telling us about music, the powers that we assign to it tell us about ourselves, and the overwhelming concerns of our society and our time. The Twenty-First Century

[51] http://www.npr.org/2011/06/01/136859090/the-power-of-music-to-affect-the-brain
https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2015/sep/30/bleak-history-music-as-torture-suzanne-cusick-morag-grant
http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20130107-can-mozart-boost-brainpower

demands on music belie our concerns about how the brain functions, and how we can turn art to our advantage in order to "fix" the damage that has been wrought, or inoculate the unborn against the world into which they will be born.

But what do we have now, that performs the functions that music was thought to accomplish in the Nineteenth Century? Or, more importantly, what hidden work does music do for us, that we take for granted? There is a common assumption that sporting events and the like are the main "community building" fortification in our current era, but there is significant research pointing to the fact that musical events, whether standing room rock shows, or more refined classical offerings, do more real work to create a sense of community and connection, as well as helping people regulate emotions and generally become "happier."[52] One thing is certain, the linking of music and the objectification of women, like we have seen in the extreme in the example of DuMaurier's *Trilby*, is still very much alive and well. Women who step into the spotlight as musical performers, from modern pop-divas and their operatic counterparts, are scrutinized for their physical attributes, and de-humanized for their behavior, in a way that is all but unthinkable of for their male counterparts. For the everyday person, without even trying to be aware of the lives of pop singers, we are bombarded with pictures of how Brittany has "let herself go" or shocking reports that someone has taken pictures of Taylor Swift with yet another new lover.

The insistence on policing the bodies of women musicians and other performers, and through them their behavior, is perhaps our legacy from the Victorians; it has

[52] http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0305735616659552

certainly become something that is dishearteningly taken for granted as inevitable. As Sarah Goodwin points out in her essay from *Embodied Voices*, "Even someone as proper as Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet knows that when she sings she is participating in one aspect of the courtship ritual, presenting herself to a masculine audience for assessment as attractively as possible. Her performance at the keyboard has a direct corollary in the posturing promenade around the room, in which the woman presents her body's attractions. Elizabeth Bennet ultimately refuses both forms of self-marketing, and in Austen's text more power accrues to her because of her refusal" (68). This assessment of Elizabeth's aloof attitude to musical discipline is spot on, and it is certainly an aspect of her character that makes her a worthy role-model. Like so many of Austen's women, from Elizabeth to Jane in *Emma*, to Anne in *Persuasion*, their actions in the musical realm are lessons in how to cope with the unfair situation that women find themselves in, while still maintaining a sense of personal independence and volition. But women's option to remove themselves from the equation should not be the only avenue of escape from this unhealthy cycle. The diva today is a far cry from the Victorian Nightingales, clad in armor (sometimes literally) and making bold assertions of withstanding fire and lightning, and emerging unscathed, nay, "bulletproof." Perhaps this will do the trick, deflecting attempts to deflate and tear down these women who have come to be symbols of strength and potential power. Then again, perhaps it will be in the sharp turn away from traditionally delineated gender markers, insistently asserted in the generation that is growing up now, that will finally start to dispel these unhealthy presumptions and demands on bodies and minds of musical women. In conclusion, I

would like to end on a note of hope, and taking a page from the musical *Wicked*, from the character of Elphaba, who does not conform to anyone's expectation, with regards to appearance, and defies conventional demands on her behavior as well. Disappointment with the way things are drives her to a point of transcendent rejection of the chains that would bind her, as she sings, in a role that was brought to life by one of the most renowned Broadway divas performing today, Idina Menzel, in "Defying Gravity:"

> I'm through accepting limits
> 'cause someone says they're so
> Some things I cannot change
> But till I try, I'll never know!
> Too long I've been afraid of
> Losing love I guess I've lost
> Well, if that's love
> It comes at much too high a cost!
> . . .
> So if you care to find me
> Look to the western sky!
> As someone told me lately:
> "Everyone deserves the chance to fly!"
> And if I'm flying solo
> At least I'm flying free
> To those who'd ground me
> Take a message back from me
> Tell them how I am
> Defying gravity
> I'm flying high
> Defying gravity
> And soon I'll match them in renown![53]

[53] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZpa2lgWWCU

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